

MASTERS OF MODERN ART

PISSARRO

By A. TABARANT. Translated
by J. LEWIS MAY.
With forty illustrations.



LONDON

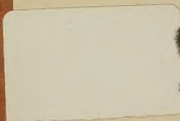
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PISSARRO

MASTERS OF MODERN ART

A series of monographs dealing with the work of modern artists, each volume containing text and 40 illustrations.

RENOIR. By FRANÇOIS FOSCA.

GAUGUIN. By TRISTAN REY.

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PISSARRO. By A. TABARANT.

THE BODLEY HEAD

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1925

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PISSARRO

LET us proceed at once to the subject of our story.

Camille Pissarro was born of a Creole mother, on the 10th July 1830, at the little Danish island of Saint-Thomas in the West Indies, which was colonised almost entirely by Jews. His father, a French Jew, was, in his remoter ancestry, of Portuguese Hebrew descent, and was engaged in the ironmongery trade. It was intended that Camille should, in due course, enter upon a business career, although all his spare time was spent not in figuring but in drawing pictures. It was, therefore decided that his education should be taken seriously in hand, and the head of the family resolved that he should go to France where, at Passy, which was then no more than a good sized village in the neighbourhood of Paris, a certain M. Savary, who kept a boarding establishment for the young, had been highly recommended to him. And so we behold Camille, in the twelfth year of his age, going on board ship, crossing the wide seas, and at length setting foot on the soil of France. France his father had described to him as a land which, though the sun shone less brilliantly there than in the West Indies, was nevertheless perhaps the fairest and certainly the richest in all

the world, a country where lofty and generous ideas spring up unforced and vigorous, as it were from the very soil. Of course he did not leave Saint-Thomas and those near and dear to him without a bitter pang ; nevertheless he was glad to shake off the strict parental control to which he had been subjected ; for that independence of spirit which was ever the deep underlying trait of his character was already beginning to display itself. He was destined to remain six years with M. Savary. Eight years before, another boarder had passed through the same establishment, one who was also to make a great name for himself in the world of Art. The name of that other boarder was Charles Meryon.

M. Savary's pupils were drawn chiefly from the bourgeois class, and the reputation of his establishment dated from the early days of the Restoration. The *Almanach Royal* makes mention of M. Savary as far back as 1824 — that is to say the first year in which such notices were included by it — as being among the number of boarding-school masters officially « recognised ». It was looked upon as being the best institution of its kind in Passy, which boasted four others. The young people were well taught. M. Savary reserved the drawing lessons for himself. He was reputed to be something of an artist, and plumed himself on his relationship with the landscapist Auguste Savary, who was a pupil of M. Boissier's and a regular exhibitor at the Salon. It is likely enough that this fortuitous circumstance determined the destiny of the boy Camille. The elder Pissarro, in commending his son to the worthy schoolmaster, had of course told him about the child's strange craze for drawing and his fears lest it should lead him to neglect his studies. He begged him to see to it that he did not waste his time like that. It was a fatal request. Its effect was to create forthwith between M. Savary and his pupil an additional bond of sympathy, which time did but strengthen. The master was impressed

with the genuine gift for drawing which his pupil displayed, and if he discouraged it in public, he fostered it in secret. What is remarkable is that, at a period when art lessons were all confined to « the helmet of the ancient warrior », he conceived a taste for drawing from nature, and did not hesitate to impart it. From him Camille learned the rudiments of grammar and arithmetic ; but he also learned to draw, from the moving living scene before him, and he learned so well that when, in 1847 — he was then close on seventeen — his father, judging him sufficiently instructed for a commercial post, sent him word to return, he was a very passable draughtsman according to the most approved principles of direct observation. Moreover, it is said that M. Savary, before he let him go, kept dinning into him over and over again to be sure and draw cocoa-trees. « Mind you don't forget to draw cocoa-trees », said the worthy old fellow : at least that is how the story goes. Unfortunately at that time Mr. Savary, if he had not given up the ghost, had certainly given up the reins of government. M. Marelle succeeded him at the beginning of 1844, and he in turn gave place to M. Poncet in 1845. However, we may well concede that M. Savary urged Camille more than once to keep true to nature and to « draw cocoanut trees » when he got back to Saint-Thomas. Nor, it must be allowed, was his advice given in vain, for nature did in fact remain the one and only model for the boy who was destined to become one of the greatest painters of his time.



The return to his native country was not taken very lightly by the young man who, in Paris, availing himself of the Sunday leave — the Pissarroes had relations there who took the boy under their wing — found means to gratify

his passion for art by strolling about and feasting his eyes on the shop-windows of the picture-dealers. Still, he had no choice but to obey the paternal mandate, and as soon as he was back again in Saint Thomas his aspirations were perforce confined to the ironmongery business. Nevertheless he went on with his drawing, sketching everything he saw, endeavouring, with such skill as he could command, to depict whatever appealed to the eye in that corner of the West Indies, the animation of the streets, the tumult of the port of Charlotte Amalia, where the niggers were ever at work loading or unloading the ships.

Thus five years went by. Pissarro, though making quite enough to keep himself, found the commercial life which he was compelled to put up with, less and less to his taste. At last, one fine day, he threw the whole thing up and ran away to Caracas. A chance meeting with a Danish painter, Fritz Melbye by name, who, when at Saint-Thomas, had seen him sketching sailors and negroes, had prompted him to take this rebellious step. Struck by the vivacity of his sketches, Fritz Melbye had persuaded him to bear him company, and they lived for a time together at Caracas, drawing, painting and mutually intoxicating themselves with art and nature.

So it was goodbye to the ironmongery business. M. Pissarro, however painfully anxious he might feel concerning his son's future — that son, moreover, being of an age to manage his own affairs — did not insist on his returning to the family fold. On the contrary, he consented to assist him to make a start in the career which he had so deliberately chosen. But it was not at Caracas that Camille was going to develop his budding talent. He needed Paris. To Paris he consequently returned in 1855, the year made famous by the great *Exposition Universelle*, which had for its setting the *Palais de l'Industrie*. Ingres and Delacroix were reaching

the zenith of their glory, while Courbet provoked violent discussions and Corot was still regarded in official circles as a rather slapdash landscapist, though they did not deny him a certain facile talent. They, with many others, were abundantly represented in the Fine-Arts section, and Pissarro had no sooner disembarked than, consumed with eagerness to behold their work, he made his way to the crowded Exhibition.

He did not linger long in contemplation of the pictures sent in by Abel de Pujol, Horace Vernet, Amaury Duval and Hippolyte Flandrin, nor before those of Picot's two brilliant pupils, Bouguereau — the winner of the first Grand Prix in 1850 — and Cabanel; and Chenavard's decorative compositions, destined for the Panthéon, also left him more or less cold. But he admired the puissant truculence of Courbet, who was showing his *Stonebreakers*, exhibited in the Salon of 1851, *The Village Maidens*, *The Wheat Sifters*, *The Spinning Woman* and *The Meeting*. He made a prolonged study of Delacroix's pictures, to the number of thirty-five, including *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, *The Madness of Medea*, the *Justice of Trajan* lent by the Rouen museum, the *Capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders*, the *Shipwreck of Don Juan*. He took a comparatively keen interest in the forty-three canvases of M. Ingres, his *Prayer of Louis XIV* (Salon of 1824) his *Homer Deified* (1842) his *Virgin and dead Christ* (1854). Was he, we may wonder, sufficiently well-informed to look for Jongkind's Paris Scenes? It is hardly probable. Did he track down Jean François Millet's *Peasant grafting a Tree*? It would be difficult to say. But he paid much attention to Daubigny's landscapes, and suddenly found himself face to face with the Corots — six landscapes and, notably, a delicious *Morning Scene*, and the famous *Souvenir of Marcoussis*. They took his breath away. Corot! Ah, the dainty green of his trees outspreading their branches

in the delicate light, his shadowy alleys, his cool waters, his clear deep skies! The Pissarro of Caracas and Saint-Thomas, the Pissarro of M. Savary, was visited by a sudden revelation, the revelation of that art towards which he was vaguely conscious that his whole being was yearning. Corot! From that day onwards Camille Pissarro, the real Camille Pissarro, came into being, like a chick emerging from the shell it has shattered. Now he had but to put his young powers to the test. The path of his desire lay open before him; to seek, at first, his inspiration from Corot, and then, little by little, to yield himself up to the promptings of his own genius. This first programme which for ten whole years Pissarro was to strive to carry out, may be regarded as beginning in 1855.

He went to see the master-landscapist at his studio, No. 58 Rue Paradis Poissonnière. He was welcomed with the most perfect courtesy by the kindly sexagenarian, whose cheerful philosophy was so widely popular. Nor was his reception any less gracious at the studio of Anton Melbye, the brother of Fritz, his companion in the West Indies. He was one of the best of the Danish school of painters. He had studied under Eckersberg at Dusseldorf, and afterwards, in 1847, had come to pursue his studies in Paris where, since 1848, he had been exhibiting at the Salon. The *Exposition Universelle* contained an important *Naval Battle* by him, which had been commissioned by the Danish Government. He was mainly occupied with sea and land-scapes, but he also went in for historical and *genre* painting. He was, in short, versed in all the departments of his art. He took it into his head to entrust Pissarro with the task of finishing off his skies, and then, with a growing interest in the young artist, whose great promise he seemed to divine, he made him get seriously to work, put him up to things of which he was still ignorant regarding the art of painting, or, better, spared

him the fumbblings and false starts that usually fall to the beginner's lot.

However, M. Pissarro senior, though he was willing to help Camille, and to make him a sufficient monthly allowance to live on, expected him, in return, to work along steadily, without wandering too far from the beaten track, and he was rather apprehensive of the effect that the attractions of Bohemia might have upon him. He would have liked to see him a docile pupil at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, or if not that, he was at least anxious for him to belong to one of those private academies whose renown had no doubt come to his ears. Old Picot's studio was at that time highly thought of, as also were those of Isidore Dagnan and Leymann, the German, and there used to forgather there a whole crowd of hum-drum, unimaginative young people whom the tumultuous evolution of the New Art failed to excite. Camille entered his name on their books, worked with great application, profited by such useful lessons as they were able to afford him — those especially which enabled him to paint from the nude — but in no short time resumed his complete independence, resolutely turning his back on the official, the imperial, route, along which, from filial deference, he had consented to travel for a time. From this time forth his chief studio was to be the countryside through which he would roam with his paint-box and his easel, picking out subjects for his brush. And that countryside was, to begin with, such as was still to be found at the gate of Paris, at Montmartre, and thereafter that adjoining region which the market gardener was slowly winning from field and woodland. ✓

It was in the course of these early peregrinations that he encountered a painter who was destined to become his intimate friend, Ludovic Piette, his senior by four years, who had passed through the studio of Thomas Couture. It

was in similar circumstances that he got to know the landscapist Chintreuil and his young and inseparable companion Jean Alfred Desbrosses. All through 1856 he worked with feverish energy. As soon as he had painted something he thought good, he showed it to Anton Melbye, who criticised, corrected, and never failed to give him some valuable hints. He would take his work and show it to Corot, whose appreciation, for which he gave his reasons, was worth all the lessons imaginable. Moreover, the great artist was soon to give him lessons in the strict sense of the word; they were masterly, though always brief and reticent, the worthy man being sparing of words, and anything but professorial in manner. Doubtless he discerned in this young artist of twenty-six those sterling and truly rare qualities whereof he was shortly to give such startling manifestations.

It was in 1857 that he became acquainted, at the Académie Suisse on the Quai d'Orfèvres, (which he visited in passing, for he was never entered there as a regular pupil,) with a quite young man, a youth ten years his junior, who displayed a passionate love of painting. That young man was Claude Monet. In 1858 he went to live at Montmorency, where he worked tremendously hard. In 1859 he made his first appearance before the public. He sent a landscape to the Salon. Would it be accepted? He earnestly hoped so, but none the less he dreaded the terrible ordeal. The Salon — at that time it was only held every other year, and it was not until 1863 that it became annual — was then the great dispenser of glory, indeed the only one, since no other public exhibition entered into competition with it. His picture was accepted, and he must have been brimming over with delight. A picture by him at the Palais d'Industrie! The entry in the catalogue ran as follows: « Pissarro (Camille) born at Saint-Thomas (Danish Colonies), pupil of Anton Melbye. *Landscape at Montmorency* ». In this manner the débutant paid his

debt of gratitude to the Danish painter, and the circumstance redounds to his honour. Unfortunately the picture was badly hung, far too high up to be properly seen. It mattered not. The main thing was that it figured on one of those walls that were adorned, that year, by such masterpieces as *Dante and Virgil* and *Macbeth* by Corot ; *Ovid among the Scythians*, *Herminia and the Shepherds* by Delacroix, the *Woman taking her Cow to Pasture* by Millet, and the *Banks of the Oise and Fields in Springtime* by Daubigny. Pissarro could say to his parents, to his neighbours and to the dealers round about, « I am exhibiting at the Salon ».

He set to work again with renewed ardour. Was he not at last about to solve the problem of living by his painting ? He would shortly be thirty years of age. It was a humiliating thing for him to be dependent on his family. But how was he to sell pictures, particularly landscapes ? That was the rub. To add to his troubles the Salon of 1861 shut its doors against him. He was consequently obliged to mark time for two years before he was able to try his luck again. Alas, fortune was no kinder to him in 1863, none of the three landscapes he sent in finding favour with the jury. This time it was nothing more nor less than a disaster.

It was not really such a disaster, because the partiality of the committee — which included Heim, Picot, Brascassat, Robert Fleury, Jean Hippolyte Flandrin, Signol, Meissonier (Ingres and Delacroix were members, but they were never present at the meetings) — that partiality, now more evident than ever, called forth such a storm of protests that the uproar reached the ears of the Emperor. He made enquiries, went to the Palais de l'Industrie, suggested a revision of the rejected works, and then, by reason of the opposition he encountered, gave orders that all the pictures should be exhibited. Hence the Salon des Refusés so famous in the history of modern art. Organised by a committee composed

of Chintreuil, the two Desbrosses, Félix Dupuis, Frederick Juncker, Lapostollet, Levé, Jules Pelletier, it opened on the 15th May, that is to say a fortnight later than the official Salon itself. A partition with a doorway was placed at the southern end of the Palais, so that people could pass from one Exhibition to the other. Pissarro was represented by three paintings, bearing the titles, *A Landscape*, *A Study*, *A Village*. The entry in the catalogue read : « Pissaro — with one r — 23 Rue Neuve-Bréda ». He was in brilliant company, since Manet — who was exhibiting his *Lunch on the grass* — Whistler — with his *Woman in the White Dress* — Jongkind, Fantin-Latour, Cazin, Jean Paul Laurens, Chintreuil, Cals, Legros, Harpignies, Vollon, had also suffered a rebuff at the hands of the jury.

Camille Pissarro's three canvases excited remark, and even praise. « Not finding his name in the previous catalogue », wrote Castagnary, « I take it that he is a young man. Corot seems to be a favourite with him. A good master, monsieur, but one on no account to be imitated ». And the critic proceeded to trounce the uncompromising attitude of the jury, and especially the detestable Signol, who was its moving spirit. « To accept *The Suffering Vestal* and *Rhadamanthus and Zenobia*, and to reject, or concur in rejecting, as unworthy of the Salon, landscapes like those of MM. Harpignies, Lavieille, Chintreuil, Jongkind, Lansyer, Saint Marcel, Pissarro, is most foolishly to invite the hostility of the artists and the reprisals of the critics¹ ».

But the Salon des Refusés was an excellent thing for him in another way. It made him acquainted with a manner of painting different from that which he had hitherto practised, and also with another group of painters. He was already familiar with the works of Edouard Manet, a newcomer

1. Castagnary, *Salons*.

who was beginning to be talked of in the studios as a refractory pupil of Thomas Couture. Early in the year he had visited his private exhibition at Martinet's in the Boulevard des Italiens. And so he took a great interest in the *Lunch on the grass*, the sensation of the Salon des Refusés, and vehemently defended its novel and bold technique against the onslaughts of the philistines who came to ridicule or denounce it.

The jury of 1864 did not harden their hearts against the revolutionary exhibitors of 1863. They accepted the two landscapes sent in by Pissarro, the *Banks of the Marne* and the *Cachalas Road at La Roche-Guyon*. The catalogue gives his address as 57 Rue de Vannes, and adds the note « Pupil of Anton Melbye and Corot ». Of Corot, indeed! And the lengthy counsels of the master justified the appellation of 'pupil', which, moreover, Camille did not assume without having been granted due permission.

He had been married two years and, on the 23rd February 1863, Madame Pissarro had presented him with his first son, Lucien. He went for a while to live and to paint at La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire, but he had an agent in Paris, M. Guillemet of 20 Grande Rue, Batignolles, where his pictures could be seen. He figures in the Salon of 1865 — still as pupil of Anton Melbye and Corot — with his *Hemp-fields on the Banks of the Marne* and *The Waterside*. The influences which affected his early style were still apparent, but his touch had become broader and freer.

This Salon of 1865 was the Salon which exhibited Manet's famous *Olympia*. Round this picture the battle of the schools raged fast and furious; the violence of it indeed was paroxysmal. Insults, and even blows, were exchanged over this work of a painter who seemed, at each successive exhibition, to defy sober opinion and that middle-class taste which was represented by the leaders of the official school. Camille

Pissarro once more ranged himself with Manet's defenders, and this time a friendship was established between them, a friendship which grew stronger and deeper with the passing years. It was indeed about this time — the winter of 1865-1866 — that Manet's friends — painters and *littérateurs* — made a regular habit of meeting every evening at a café known as Le Guerbois, No. 9 Avenue de Clichy — now the Brasseurie Muller. Pissarro was admitted into this society, by no means an exclusive one — whose members soon became targets for the raillery of the little boulevard news-sheets. With Manet as the central figure, the critic and sculptor Zacharie Astruc, Vigniaux the novelist, and a little later, Emile Zola and Duranty, Hippolyte Babou, Armand Silvestre, Léon Cladel, Philippe Burty, Guillemet, Frédéric Bazille, Bellot and Bracquemond the engravers — all these put in an appearance nearly every night, though Friday nights were looked on as the really important occasions. Fantin-Latour, Renoir, Degas turned up from time to time; Cézanne and Monet more seldom. At rare intervals Constantin Guys was to be seen among the party. And Nadar used to blow in and out again like a hurricane. Marcellin Desboutin did not come on the scene till 1872¹. Courbet was never one of the party. Living for the most part outside Paris, Pissarro was unable to be a very regular attendant, but it was always a great pleasure to him to take part in the discussions of this tumultuous Procope of the right bank, discussions which had for their inexhaustible theme, painting and painters, the Salon, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the critics and the public.

The only landscape that Pissarro sent to the Salon in 1866 was accepted. It was entitled *The Banks of the Marne in*

1. The meetings at le Guerbois were not given up till about 1875, contrary to Theodore Duret's statement in his *Histoire de Manet*.

Winter. In the catalogue he was given as « Pupil of A. Melbye, Rue du Fond de l'Ermitage, Pontoise ». He did not exhibit in 1867. In 1868 he was catalogued with the address 108 Boulevard Rochechouart — his two pictures, the *Hill of Jallais* and *l'Hermitage* were the subject of a further reference by Castagnary who complained that they were hung too high, « but not high enough to prevent admirers from noting the sterling qualities which distinguish the artist who produced them ». In 1869 — the catalogue gives him as care of M. Carpentier, 9 Boulevard Montmartre — *l'Ermitage, a landscape*, went unnoticed ¹.

Be it noted that the year 1866 marks the beginning of a profound development in the work of Camille Pissarro. Corot's influence continued to be noticeable for some time longer, but it grew fainter and fainter with each successive picture. The artist began to lay on his colours more freely. Neutral tones became less numerous on his palette, giving place, little by little, to a whole scale of pure tones, — yellows, vermilions, emerald-greens, lakes. The air blows more freely through his landscapes. It is also important to observe that, from 1865 onwards, the description « Pupil of Corot » no longer appeared in the Salon catalogues nor, after 1866, did « Pupil of Melbye ». Pissarro was beginning to have more self-reliance; he was acquiring that precious corollary of talent, *individuality*. Between his landscapes of Montmorency, la Roche-Guyon and La Varenne and those which he painted at Louveciennes before, or just after the war, the difference is so evident that the most inexperienced eye cannot fail to notice it. Not only is the technique totally transformed, but the very spirit of the subjects chosen shows a keener sense of life. We can see in them new longings unknown to Corot's

1. Pissarro sometimes wrote « Ermitage », sometimes « Hermitage ». The latter spelling is officially correct.

generation, longings which a few years hence were to cause such a stir, the longing for an added sensitiveness, for more colour, more air, more light. It was not so much a new manner of painting as a new mentality, a new view of things, which was then revealing itself in the works of Pissarro, as in those of Sisley, Renoir and Claude Monet.

In 1868 he went to live at Louveciennes, not far from the Marly aqueduct. He had got into touch with a dealer whose name crops up in all the minor artistic history of the day, P. F. Martin — Père Martin, as he used to be called — who bought pictures from the younger men and kept up a connection with them not infrequently punctuated by quarrels. He was not, as has been alleged, an ex-mason, but an ex-singer, or at least an ex-choirman, who had been led by the vicissitudes of life to take up picture dealing, and was guided in that line of business by a remarkably astute commercial instinct. Corot, and subsequently Jongkind, had benefited by his good offices. It was said that he hadn't his equal « on the Paris market ».

It is true that his prices were not brilliant, and, if Camille Pissarro accepted them, it was because there was no use in arguing with an empty stomach. From twenty to forty francs, according to the size of the canvas. Ah, well ! Before very long we shall see him resigning himself to prices still less remunerative.

Père Martin bought the pictures he had in the Salon of 1870, two landscapes of the country round Louveciennes. The Salon catalogue gives him the following double address : « Louveciennes (Seine-et-Oise) and Paris, c/o M. Martin, 52 Rue Lafitte. » Through Martin's agency, Pissarro got into touch with a group of collectors who, with an eye to the future and counting on the decline of the 1830 school were on the look-out for fresh talent. The name of Pissarro was still quite unknown to them.



Then came the war of 1870, like a clap of thunder in a clear sky. It was the last thing in the world that people expected. It dispersed Pissarro's group of friends; it put an end for the time to the meetings at the Guerbois Café. Manet, who was their moving spirit, became a staff-officer in the Garde Nationale, of which Meissonier was colonel. Frédéric Basille was sent away on outpost duty and, as every-body knows, was killed in the battle of Beaune-la-Rolande on the 28th November. Cézanne, who had been living in Paris since 1861, returned to Aix, and Monet decided to visit Holland. Pissarro, however, made up his mind to stay on at Louveciennes and wait for better days; but he had counted without the enemy who, victorious all along the line, were preparing to invade the neighbourhood of Paris. He had no alternative but flight, and was not even able to carry away with him the canvases which were piled up in his studdio. There were about fifteen hundred of them, nearly everything he had painted since 1855. He also had to leave behind some canvases belonging to Claude Monet which the latter has asked him to take care of till the war was over. Then came the hideous débacle. The Prussians arrived and turned the painter's modest dwelling into a meat store. There they discovered his canvases, probably made fun of them, used the bigger ones as aprons and threw them, all stained with blood, into the street.

Driven out of Louveciennes by the invasion, he went, first of all, to spend a few weeks at the house of his friend Ludovic Piette at Montfoucault in Mayenne, and then decided to take refuge in England, where he had a married sister. There he again came across Claude Monet who, having been all over Holland and not wanting to go back to Paris

while the war was still raging, had decided to stay on in London until hostilities came to an end. They worked together, and Pissarro painted some landscapes of the London suburbs, at Norwood, and at Sydenham. They even tried to exhibit at the Royal Academy, but the committee were still blinder than their Paris confrères, and rejected the pictures they sent in as unsuitable. They always went about together, and paid long visits to the National Gallery, where they were much impressed, much moved by the art of Turner, the art which animates such masterpieces as *The Entrance to Calais Harbour*, *The Passage of the Alps*, *The Bay of Baice*, *Sunlight and Mist*, awakening in them the sentiment that here was something new in technique, richer and more expressive than theirs, and above all, more akin to the sensibility of the modern mind. The glowing fairyland of Turner's pictures was a revelation for Pissarro and for Monet, as the work of Claude le Lorrain and Poussin had been for Turner. « They are, first and foremost, struck by his effects of snow and ice » says Paul Signac¹. « They say that this marvellous result is obtained not with uniform white, but by means of a number of touches of different colours, put one beside another and reconstituting at a certain distance, the desired effect. »

They encountered Daubigny who, like them, had taken up his quarters in London. The illustrious landscapist rendered them a signal service, of which they were not slow to realise the importance. He introduced them both to a picture dealer who had set up the year before in the Rue Lafitte, — a dealer who would have been profoundly surprised if some Sibyl had foretold him the troublous future that lay before him, told him how he would pass through difficult and even tragic days, to brilliant and happy times, and how

1. Delacroix au néo-impressionisme, p. 50.

intimately his fortunes were bound up with the destiny, the militant and glorious destiny, of a whole generation of painters. That dealer was Durand-Ruel. They were both in urgent need of funds. Durand-Ruel bought a few pictures from them — the price was by no means magnificent — and promised to do his best for them.

Pissarro soon began to weary of his sojourn in London. But what was the outlook if he returned to France? Paris was in the thick of the Commune troubles, and it was clearly better to wait until order was restored. How this contre-temps weighed on his spirits is revealed in a letter he wrote to the critic Théodore Duret, another habitué of the Guernsey, thanking him for a letter of introduction to a London friend, M. Berthel. This letter has not hitherto been published.

« I am only here for a very little time. My intention is to return to France as soon as possible. Yes, my dear Duret, I shall not stay here, and it is only when you are abroad that you realise how beautiful, great and hospitable is France. What a difference is here. You only get disdain, indifference, and even rudeness; among one's confrères jealousy and the most selfish mistrust. Here there is no such thing as art; everything is treated as a matter of business.

As for selling, I have done nothing, except that Durand-Ruel bought two small pictures from me. My painting does not catch on, not in the least, a fate that pursues me more or less everywhere.

Please give Père Martin a good handshake from me, also his wife. How I long for everything to be settled and for Paris to come into its own again. »



Paris did come into its own again. Pissarro returned to France, lost no time in getting back to his house, which

the Germans had stripped of its contents, and quickly got into touch with his Paris friends. But he wanted a wider field for his subjects, and the neighbourhood of Louveciennes, the Forest of Marly, where for three years he had set up his easel, no longer satisfied his yearning for the country. It was just a little middle-class suburb, with villas and pretty-pretty gardens, its roads peopled with city folk. The country about Pontoise, where he had painted in 1868-1869, attracted him by its variety, its picturesque hills and dales, its river and its streamlets. He therefore went and settled down at No. 26 Rue de l'Hermitage, Pontoise, and it was from there that, for ten years to come — until 1882 — he dated nearly the whole of his prolific output. The year 1872 was a particularly good one for him. He made a close study of peasant life and carefully observed the habits of the tillers of the fields. As soon as he had painted a few canvases he carted them off to Paris and handed them to Père Martin, to Durand-Ruel, or to some collectors with whom he had got into direct touch, Théodore Duret to begin with, who had just returned full of enthusiasm from a voyage to Japan. In spite of the way in which his work was being run down, Durand-Ruel bought up his pictures with ever increasing confidence, and tried to place them with the admirers of Corot, Daubigny and Millet, who were somewhat disconcerted and much bedazzled by such strange visions of earth and sky, by the emphasis in the colouring, from which all intermediate tones were absent.

He had now, it must be noted, entered into relations with a little artists' colourman who kept a shop in the Rue Clauzel : one Tanguy. Père Tanguy, as he too was called, had long been employed as a grinder at Edouard's at No. 6 in the same street. In 1867 Edouard transferred his business to Malard senior, and Tanguy, not hitting it off with his new boss, cleared out and set up for himself at No. 14, almost

next door. He had been mixed up, to a very slight extent, in the Communist revolt. He had experienced the horrors of the Camp of Satory, and he had been brought up before a Court Martial. Thanks, however, to certain people he had at the back of him, he was able to get out of his difficulties and to resume his business as a canvas and colour merchant, to which, since 1870, he had added a trade in pictures which he selected from among the less academic specimens. He immediately took to Pissarro, who soon afterwards brought Guillaumin to him, and subsequently Cézanne.

On the 2nd February 1873 Pissarro in a letter hitherto unpublished, wrote to Théodore Duret as follows : —

« You are right, *mon cher*, we are beginning to make our mark. We have certain masters up in arms against us, but you can't expect everyone to agree with you when you butt in and set up your modest little flag in the midst of the fight. Durand-Ruel stands firm, and we hope to go straight ahead without worrying as to what people think about us. »

He struck up a friendship with Victor Vignon, a young landscape artist of twenty-six, who lived in the neighbourhood. Then another companion was bestowed on him, his friend Cézanne, who had returned from Aix a few months before and had come to reside at Auvers-sur-Oise with his wife and son. They ran across each other pretty frequently in the valley and discussed projects and ideas. Pissarro also occasionally saw Claude Monet, who was living in seclusion at Argenteuil. It was with great interest that he watched the development of his talent. « A very pure talent », he declared, « and a very studied art, based on observation and an entirely novel perception. It is poetry obtained through the harmonies of divers colours¹. » It should be noted in passing that Pissarro always took a pleasure in singing his

1. An unpublished letter to Theodore Duret (2 May 1873).

comrades' praises. He had a great gift for irony, and possessed, when occasion required it, a tongue with a sting in it, but never did he deliver himself, either by tongue or pen, of the smallest word of disparagement. Every time a rupture threatened what he used to call « the camp of friends » he hastened to intervene, and the quarrels immediately subsided under the influence of his good humour, his resolutely jovial vivacity which the hard struggle for existence never availed to repress. And the struggle was indeed a terrible one for a married man with a wife and family, for he found the market increasingly difficult in proportion as he forsook the ordinary æsthetic canons of the day. In a letter which he wrote in October 1873 to Théodore Duret, he confessed that he was waiting for the arrival of the collector in Paris in order to sell a picture. « I haven't a halfpenny to bless myself with » he adds. « I have worked very hard, and I hope that this year I shall at last put myself beyond the reach of want, at all events during the dead season ». He announces also that he has begun a picture representing a shepherdess with her sheep. He was in fact beginning to give a place — as yet a minor one — to figures in his landscapes, and the connoisseurs who visited him invariably took a keen interest in his experiments in a domain on which hitherto no painter of note had ventured to set foot since Millet. To portray, after what Millet had done, the real peasant toiling on the real soil, standing out against a horizon with no other background save that supplied by nature, seemed something akin to madness, and no one imagined that any who followed him could be anything else than servile imitators. But such considerations had no weight with Pissarro. His aim was simply to represent, with the largest possible measure of truth, the objects and the living beings in the luminous atmosphere in which he beheld them. Moreover, though he admired in Millet the personality — often puissant — of a master who

in the interpretation of human activities has come nearer to life than anyone save Courbet, he none the less perceived the mark of a naturism that was still tainted with convention, that had brought with it into the Barbizon meadows the hateful traditions of the studio. « It is I who am Hebrew, it is Millet who is biblical » said he, later on, with a laugh, when superficial critics would persist in regarding his peasants as mere pastiches of Millet's. That hit the mark. It indicates the wide gulf that sunders the genuine humanism of the one, from the rural romanticism of the other. It differentiates not merely two artists, but two epochs, two schools, two sensibilities.



It happened that he was working alongside of Cézanne, who, in the course of the summer of 1873 painted at Auvers his *Maison du Pendu*, afterwards included in the Camondo collection. It has been said, with rather too much insistence, that Cézanne's ideas had greatly influenced him, and there is no doubt that he took an interest in them and that he, in turn, set himself to discover a more sober system of colouring. But the spontaneity of his Creole nature was opposed to the perpetual self-torment of Cézanne, who was always finding fault with himself, and who brought forth, in suffering, masterpieces which he forthwith repudiated, « Whenever you want five-footed sheep » he said jokingly, in a letter to Duret (8th December 1873) « Cézanne will be able to supply you, for he has some very strange studies of things he has seen as no one else ever saw them ».

In January 1874 an unexpected piece of good fortune befell him which, however, so far as he was concerned, had no immediate effect. At an anonymous sale at the Hôtel Drouot, seven of his pictures were put up to auction, A still

life, *Chestnuts and Pottery on a Table* fetched two hundred and seventy francs ; two landscapes, *A Road* and *A Village Street* went for three hundred and twenty and three hundred and fifty francs, respectively. But — wonderful to relate ! — a *Pathway planted with Trees, near Pontoise*, reached seven hundred francs, and for a *Factory and Dam on the Oise*, the bidding attained nine hundred and fifty francs. Such figures were so extraordinary that they were everywhere regarded as incredible. They were talked about in the studios, at Tortoni's, at the *Nouvelle Athènes*, where almost all the old group that used to meet at the Guerrois, now forgathered. And our artist who was more staggered than anyone else, wrote off in great haste to Théodore Duret, who had been no less dazzled by the event, « The effects of the Drouot sale have made themselves felt as far away as Pontoise. People are greatly surprised that a picture of mine should have been run up to nine hundred and fifty francs. They even say such a figure is amazing, for a mere landscape. » There is in this letter an unmistakable note of proud satisfaction, the simple, sane joy of an artist to whom the smallest success brings comfort. We may certainly take it that it mattered little to Pissarro that the person who chiefly benefited by this piece of good fortune was the dealer.

We come now to a decisive date : 1874. Decisive it was, and not for Pissarro alone, but for all the painters whose friend he was, and who were drawn to each other by evident affinities of technique. Until then, the bonds which united them had remained vague, and neither press nor public had suspected their existence. All at once these bonds were made clearly manifest, strengthened as they were by ignorant criticism which pitchforked them one and all, into the same sack, held them all up to public derision, to the insults, the hatred, of those people who are scandalised by any display of independence, by any attempt to escape from the

common rut. Instead of remaining a mere friendly group, they were welded by persecution into a cohort. An epithet applied to them in derision was destined to be the name by which they were to be known to posterity. Such were the origins of « Impressionism », that is to say the most important thing in the artistic world known to the latter end of the nineteenth century, an event whose effects were felt all through the first quarter of the twentieth. A modest exhibition was the origin of it. The photographer Nadar had put his galleries in the Boulevard des Capucines at the disposal of those who were known as the « independents » and the « intransigeants » and who, maltreated by the jury of the Salon, desired nevertheless to bring their works to the notice of connoisseurs. The company thus improvised was pretty mixed. With Pissarro, who had sent in six landscapes, were Sisley, Cézanne, Claude Monet, Renoir, Guillaumin, Berthe Morisot, Degas — all these constituted a more or less homogeneous group. Then came Robert, Boudin, Cals, Bracquemond, Gustave Colin, Lepine, de Nittis, Rouart and, after these, about fifteen less known artists, pressed into the service to give weight to the protest against the tyranny of officialdom. The representatives of the new tendencies, the painters who were known from their experiments in the treatment of light and colour, were therefore in a minority.

Constituted under the style « Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs », the exhibition opened its doors on the 15th April, two weeks before the Salon. It at once became a target for the clumsiest raillery. The public, excited by the onslaughts of the press, rushed off to Nadar's there to burst into roars of laughter at what they termed « the daubs of these charlatans, these madmen ». Claude Monet exhibited, together with some other pictures, a seascape — it is at present the property of M. Donop de Monchy — entitled : *Impression, Sunrise*. A duffer by the

name of Louis Leroy, on the staff of the *Charivari*, the editor of which, Pierre Vernon, had made it of all papers the foremost in hostility to the new school, took the title of the picture as the heading for his article : *Exposition des Impressionnistes*. This was the origin of the name ' Impressionnistes '. Impressionists forsooth ! These wild men, these stubborn savages, disdained — was it laziness or impotence ? — to finish their pictures. They were content to dab on a few « impressions ». What humbugs. Impressionists ! The expression thus used by the futile Leroy, to stigmatise the Exhibition, had an unprecedented vogue. No one talked of anything but « impressions, impressionism and impressionists ». The challenge was thrown down. It was proudly taken up by those at whom it was aimed. « Impressionists ? Well then, yes, precisely, Impressionists we will be ! »

The Exhibition closed on the 15th May without bringing any great material success to any of the exhibitors. Pissarro had come in for a full share of the spiteful criticism. He exhibited fields covered with the most vulgar vegetables, vistas of cabbages. Clearly he was out to defy the public. He had sold nothing, and the poor artist was beginning to feel anxious, for the summer was at hand, and there would be no more chance of selling anything till September came again¹. Four very difficult months went by at l'Hermitage, but they were four months of terrifically hard work. October came, but brought with it no noticeable improvement. And so Pissarro accepted an invitation from his friend Piette, who asked him to come and spend some time at Montfoucault with his family. « I shan't be back again before January », « he writes to Duret on the 22nd October. « I am going to

1. It is a remarkable thing and worthy of note that the he still fetched good prices at the Hotel Drouot, where on the 20th April at th sale of G. de L. one of his pieces, *View of a Factory*, went for 580 francs.

study men and animals in the real country and see what they look like ». However, he did not go away from Paris without entrusting his interests to someone. It was the painter Guillaumin, a staunch friend, who was responsible for « seeing to some little jobs » for him, such, for example, as displaying to possible purchasers some pictures he had left in a 'pied à terre' he had taken in the Rue Berthe. However, on the 11th December he says : « I am thinking of leaving the woods amid which I have been living for a month and of going back to Pontoise... I haven't worked so badly here ; I have been tackling figures and animals. I have several *genre* pictures. I am rather chary about going in for a branch of art in which first-rate artists have so distinguished themselves. It is a very bold thing to do, and I am afraid of making a complete failure of it ¹. » We must emphasise this modesty on the part of an artist who at that very time had just painted some of his most attractive landscapes with figures, — Women tending sheep, and cows, and so forth. But Pissarro was not one to blow his own trumpet, not one of those who seek to awaken praise by setting the note themselves. Back again at Pontoise, though not until February, it was figure-painting to which he devoted himself.

« I have always thought », he writes on the 17th June 1875, « about painting, as you advise me to do, a biggish picture with people, people out in the open. There is no lack of subjects ; the thing is to find a suitable person in the proper character who would be willing to pose. Money is the only way to get over the difficulty, and money is unhappily just what I haven't got. It is no good thinking of painting anything of a picture save from life, especially on the lines that I want to follow. But never fear. As soon as I see a chance to carry out my plan, I shall take it ».

1. Unpublished letters to Théodore Duret.

And, perfect comrade that he is, he adds by way of postscript, his opinion of Guillaumin and his talent, — « I am glad to hear that you have taken Guillaumin's *Mauresque*. He is a capital fellow and I am very fond of him. He has, at this very moment, got a picture at Tanguy's. It is a landscape, *Banks of the Seine*, a first-rate thing. If you have time, go and see it. »

But we are now coming to the dramatic period in the history of Impressionism, to those critical days when the plucky little group formed by Pissarro, Monet, Sisley and Renoir had to put up such a hard fight not only against the active forces of reactionary criticism, but against the redoubtable inertia born of the indifference or timidity of collectors scared by the general hue and cry. These painters produced picture after picture with figures and landscapes all drenched with light and thrilling with life. But all in vain. It became harder and harder for them to find customers to appreciate and to buy them, to pay so much as a paltry pound or two for their pictures — « anarchist stuff » said the champions of law and order — which they dared not even hang on their own walls for fear of scandalizing visitors. There were certainly a few who believed in them, but they had already bought their quota, and the dealers who were attracted by their style of painting — Durand-Ruel, Martin, Tanguy — considered that the likelihood of adding to their list of admirers was at least problematical. Of course it would all come right in time. The long expected *clientèle* would appear in due course. Impressionism would win some day or other. Yes, but when? And meantime, how were they going to live? That, in the year 1875, was the question that confronted every artist of the independent group. Such was the question; but there was no answer to it. A period of great hardship was at hand — and it was to endure for at least ten years.

No one has yet made clear the terrible trials of poverty, of downright want, which these men went through for ten long years, from 1875 to 1885. People have referred to the length of the struggle, and we have been told that these painters often suffered the pangs of hunger. But no one has told the full story, perhaps because they thought that to revive the memory of so grievous a past would have cast a shadow over the serenity of the present. The quondam pastrycook Eugène Murer, who, later on, became an artist, and who lived so close to this impressionist period, was a most constant friend of the writer of these pages. « They had a hard time of it » he used to say laconically, and then he would relapse into silence, as though he thought he had divulged too much. And then he would show us bundles of letters — chiefly from Pissarro, who was, so to speak, the secretary to the group — and we did indeed realise that they had suffered terrible privations, and lived through the cruellest sufferings that ever fell to an artist's lot. Before them there were no doubt instances of painters condemned to a miserable bohemian existence, but that, as a rule, was the outcome of a desire to adopt the careless, happy-go-lucky pose of the traditionally improvident artist ; whereas Pissarro and his friends had never ceased to be great workers, doing all they knew to extricate themselves from their wretched plight. It therefore redounds greatly to their glory that, during the ten years of struggle, their hardships no more diminished their courage than it marred their talent. When after this interminable fight they at last beheld the first glimmer of the dawn, they were able to say with pride that they had conceded nothing to opinion, that they had continued to be themselves, and that the dawn of their triumph was rising upon the complete discomfiture of their adversaries. In the early months of 1875, Claude Monet was utterly on the rocks. This was how Edouard Manet put it

and he, coming to the rescue, suggested to Théodore Duret that he should find « someone who would buy of him from ten to twenty pictures for an all round price of a hundred francs a piece. Sisley had spent his last half-penny. As for Renoir — this be it noted was when he was painting his delightful *Pont Neuf* — he wrote to a friend saying, « I've got to find forty francs before mid-day, and so far I've only got three ». And every day there was the same lack of funds. Monet, Renoir, Sisley — and with them Berthe Morisot — decided on having a sale at the Hôtel Drouot. It was an utter fiasco. Amid laughter and jeers, seventy pictures were knocked down for a total of 10,349 francs. Pissarro had not taken part in the experiment, but he was shortly to feel the effects of it.

Those who were designated « Impressionists » decided that, come what might, they would again appear before the public, by giving another show on the lines of the Exhibition of 1874. The new venture was opened on the 11th April 1876 at Durand-Ruel's, 11, Rue Le Peletier. Pissarro, represented by landscapes of the country round about Pontoise, found himself once more in company with his friends Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Degas, who were grouped round Berthe Morisot, and in addition there came Caillebotte and Tillot. But this time, there were only nineteen painters exhibiting, as against thirty in 1874. Some had given up because they hadn't the pluck to face the music ; others had recognised that they had nothing in common with Impressionism. As for Guillaumin, the only reason he did not answer the call was that he had nothing ready.

Forthwith the usual torrent of obloquy burst forth from the press. *La France*, *le Pays*, *le Soir*, *le Soleil* published notices that were insulting or ridiculous. The palm went to a certain shoddy critic with a face like a parrot, one Albert Wolff who, being of German origin, had been compelled to

return to Germany on the outbreak of war and had hastened to come back again as soon as hostilities were over. « The wittiest man in Paris » he said of himself, serving up, *à la Parisienne*, the wit of his native Frankfort. « The Rue Lepeletier has had some bad luck », he wrote in the *Figaro*. « After the fire at the Opera, here is a fresh disaster that has overtaken the quarter. There has just been opened, at Durand-Ruel's, what purports to be an exhibition of painting..... Five or six lunatics, one of them a woman, have met together there to show off their works. These self-styled artists call themselves the Intransigents, the Impressionists. They get hold of a few canvases, some paints and brushes, throw on a few colours at random and put their signatures at the bottom. In the same way at Ville-Evrard some crazy individuals pick up stones from the road and imagine they have discovered diamonds. »

On the other hand, such an enlightened critic as Castagnary, writing about the official Salon in the *Siècle*, protested once again with severity against the blindness of a jury who had just refused *The Artist* (a portrait of Desboutin) by Manet, and he made it his text for a discussion of the private exhibition of the Impressionists. He stated that, notwithstanding the regularity with which the Impressionists had been rejected, the Salon betrayed the irresistible influence of this external impulse, this Impressionism.

« The salient feature of the present Salon », he said, « is an immense effort to obtain light and truth. Everything that suggests the conventional, the artificial, the false, is out of favour. I have seen the earliest dawn of this return to frank simplicity, but I did not think its progress had been so rapid. It is conspicuous, it is startling, this year. The younger artists have flung themselves into it to a man and, without suspecting it, the crowd acknowledge that the innovators have right on their side... Well the Impression-

nists have had a share in this movement. People who have been to Durand-Ruel's, who have seen the landscapes, so true and so pulsating with life, which MM. Claude Monet, Pissarro and Sisley have produced, entertain no doubt as to that. »

At the same time the critic and novelist Duranty was bringing out with Dentu a brochure that has since become famous, entitled « The New Painting, à propos of the Group of Artists who are exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel galleries ». He therein defined, in felicitous terms, the physiognomy of this new style of painting, and described « the young branch which had sprouted forth from Art's ancient tree ». The new tendency of the artists whose exhibition called forth so many insulting gibes he put first and foremost in coloration, « in which they have made a real discovery whose origin cannot be found elsewhere, neither among the Dutch, nor in the clear tones of the fresco, nor in the light tonalities of the eighteenth century ».

Thus the rough brutality of the attack was counter-balanced by the delicate comprehension of the defence, and the Impressionists were able, on the whole, to regard the result as satisfactory. Alas, that was not enough, as the saying goes, to keep the pot a-boiling. Collectors still persisted in looking askance on the Impressionist school. The attitude of Durand-Ruel, standing bravely in the breach and making a sort of apostolate of his business, was becoming truly heroic. The Impressionists resolved that they would mark yet a third year, 1877, by another demonstration. They had an opportunity of securing a vast room on the first floor of a house that was undergoing renovation, No. 6 Rue Le Peletier, almost at the corner of the Boulevard. The Exhibition opened its doors in April, calling itself outright « Impressionists' Exhibition ». Eighteen exhibitors took part. Pissarro brought his friend Piette. It may seem surprising that he

did not have Paul Gauguin invited, for, since 1874, he had been hearkening to his counsels. But there was a new-comer, Frédéric Cordey, a young man of twenty-three.

Pissarro's contributions — Banks of the Oise, gardens, orchards — were of the most characteristic description : sonorous touches innocent of alloy or any suspicion of an attempt to produce an intermediate effect. And he had carried his anxiety for general harmony to the point of isolating his painting by framing it within a broad white moulding called the Whistler moulding. The colours, within these frames, glittered like fireworks.

The flood of insane criticism in the press poured forth with unstinted abundance. There was an official, an inspector of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Roger Ballu, the very personification of stupidity, who played the part of the dull buffoon, in the Albert Wolff manner, without advancing against Impressionism a single argument worthy of serious discussion. The public came in crowds and laughed immoderately, more convinced than ever that the authors of these extraordinary productions in colour were but aimable jesters, merry tavern birds who were doing their very best to make the people laugh. Impressionniste — the word rhymed very well with « fumiste » (humbug). Was it really a fact that people bought these pictures ? The *Charivari* asked to see their heads in order to reproduce them for the entertainment of its readers.

Once more Pissarro and his friends put on a bold front in face of their ill-fortune. When the exhibition closed they sent some of their pictures to the Hôtel Drouot, at the risk of seeing them knocked down for the price of their frames. The sale took place on the 28th May, and forty-nine pictures were put up to auction. Each one that was shown was greeted with jests, roars of laughter and cat-calls. The total sum realised was 7,610 francs, or an average of 169 francs per

picture — which on the whole was not such a bad price. The Pissarros went for the following figures : *The Close, Springtime*, 106 francs, *Harvesters resting*, 130, *the Fieldpath*, 200, *Pear trees in blossom*, 230, *The Big Pear Tree at Montfoucault*, 130. It is true, though, that one customer had a delicious Renoir knocked down to him for 47 francs.

The summer of 1877 was spoilt for Pissarro by the ever present problem of making the two ends meet. Sadly, day by day, he would wander through the delicious Pontoise country, from l'Hermitage to Valhermeil, crossing over the Chou, or else, following the windings of the Oise, pushing on nearly as far as Vauréal. Then he would set up his easel at a dip in the road, or in view of the soft folding hills, or on some grassy path that ran along by little low-walled gardens. There would be an old woman earthing-up her potatoes, another washing, a little girl tending her goats, a cow girl passing by ; peasants unloading manure. He would get his canvas into position, make ready his palette, and lose himself in the delightful task of portraying rustic life as he saw it before his eyes. But even as he worked, his mind was running on the urgent necessities of the moment. Rapidly he would pack up his things, take the train for Paris, and go tramping the streets in search of a few shillings, for which indeed he was too often willing to barter the whole of his pictures. It sometimes happened that he would spend entire weeks in Paris, putting up either in a room which he had on the Quai d'Anjou, or else with Madame Pissarro senior, in the Rue Paradis Poissonnière, losing hour after hour in fruitless quests among his friends and his customers, at Caillebotte's, Duret's, de Bellio's, Faure's, Meunier's, commonly called Murer, Hayem's, Arosa's, a relation of Gauguin's, and at Miss Mary Cassat's, who put him in touch with her American connexions. He rushed, at his wit's end, from one to another, determined not to go back to Pontoise with empty

pockets, for there credit was no longer to be had.

Eugène Murer at that time kept a pastrycook's shop at Prince Eugène's Baths, No. 95, Boulevard Voltaire. It was a very popular resort, and he was its picturesque Ragueneau. Renoir, Sisley, Guillaumin -- his school friend at Moulins -- were habitués of the place, whereas Pissarro could only put in an appearance at rare intervals. There were also to be seen there Victor Vignon, Père Tanguy, the engravers Guérard, Norbet Goëneutte, Bresdin nicknamed Chien-Caillou, the musician Jean de Cabanes, usually known as Cabaner. Through Guillaumin, Murer had always been mixed up with the independent group. He had a passion for brilliant painting, and vowed that as soon as he could get away from his ovens for a time, he would take it up himself. Meanwhile he bought up specimens on the cheap, sometimes bartering cakes, patés and other comestibles in exchange for pictures. Besides this, he spent his evenings writing contributions to obscure papers, and he had just published, at the beginning of 1877, through Arnould of the Boulevard Montmartre, a novel entitled *Sons of the Age*, under the transparent pseudonym of Gène-Mur. He had several others in mind or on the stocks.

He left behind him -- he died in April 1906 -- a quantity of notes, reflexions and souvenirs which are in the writer's possession. « At that time » we read in one of his notebooks, « I was living on the Boulevard Voltaire in a shop decorated by the Impressionists. Renoir had adorned the frieze with brilliant garlands of flowers. Pissarro with a few strokes of the brush, had covered the walls with landscapes of Pontoise. Monet, who was always in pursuit of a louis, had contented himself with coming in to see how it was all getting on. Every Wednesday, for two years, we had met together, my friends and I, to partake of a little fraternal dinner presided over by my sister. That evening Pissarro had not

come. Over the dessert Renoir told us that all day long he had been about from place to place with a picture under his arm trying to sell it. Everywhere he had been bowed out with the words : ' You have come too late. *Pissarro* has just been. I've taken a picture from him. A matter of common humanity, you know. Poor chap, with all those youngsters '. This ' poor chap ' repeated at every door he knocked at, exasperated Renoir, who was very much put out at not having sold anything.

' What ', he cried, with that good-natured ogre's voice of his, and rubbing his nose nervously with his forefinger — a familiar gesture with him — what, because I am a bachelor and have no children, am I to die of starvation ? I'm in just as tight a corner as *Pissarro* ; yet when they talk of me, no one says ' That poor Renoir ' ».

Let us run through some of these unpublished letters — addressed to *Pissarro* by Murer. First of all let us look at the one he wrote to him on the 2nd July 1877¹.

« You want to have my Breton interior instead of the hill. It is a picture I am very much attached to ; I have scarcely any pictures of Breton folk left. I will let you have it on condition that you pay me for both little canvases at my ordinary price of fifty francs each. This is the arrangement I came to with Madame Latouche, a hundred francs for all canvases up to 20. »

We must note that the so-called paintings of Brittany mentioned by *Pissarro* had been executed by him between Montfoucault (Mayenne) and Fougères (Ille-et-Vilaine) when he was staying with Ludovic Piette.

Here is another letter, written some time later. He is

1. *Pissarro's* letters are very often undated. On the other hand, most of his pictures are dated.

on his beam ends, in Paris. He has got to find some money, somehow, by hook or by crook.

« I sent Petit a little panel for which I count on getting 50 francs, but they've asked me to call again, M. Petit being out for the day. What am I to do? I long for this drop of water like a traveller in the desert. Could you not advance me this amount? They are waiting anxiously for it at Pontoise. »

Eugène Murer answers him at once and sends him an invitation to come and see him on the Boulevard Voltaire. They have dinner together and talk things over. Pissarro makes no secret of his difficulties. Yet another letter :

« Last night I was telling you about a picture I have at Pontoise representing a woman seated. This canvas strikes me as possessing a certain interest for a collector desirous of having a series showing the progress of a given painter's search after tones. You know the picture, I think. It is a little peasant woman with a brick-red face, her head covered with a yellowish hood. It is a sombre, terrible picture, with plenty of character, and very carefully finished into the bargain. If this picture is likely to suit you, I will sell it to you gladly, it being, as you know, absolutely necessary for me to send money to Pontoise. If you care about it, you could leave the money at my mother's the first time you go down the Rue Paradis Poissonnière. I am simply throwing my things away, for these studies were precious to me. »

However, things only went from bad to worse, nor were they better for Manet, Renoir and Sisley than for Pissarro. The heroically tenacious Durand-Ruel confessed himself beaten, and the great dealer, who was simply courting ruin by crowding out his premises with pictures he could not sell, was obliged, at least temporarily, to return to such acknowledged masters as Corot, Rousseau, Delacroix and Millet, the great departed, who were now being sought after

for private collections and museums. His clients looked on his persistent defence of the Impressionists, and the praise which certain sections of the press continued to shower on their talents, as nothing more nor less than a shameless puff, and they vowed they would not be taken in by it. Now it happened that in May 1878, Théodore Duret brought out a brochure entitled *The Impressionist Painters*, on the work of Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Renoir and Berthe Morisot. In it he drew attention to the startling contrast offered by art lovers, on the one hand, who persisted in jeering at the newcomers, and on the other, the most authoritative critics and writers whose taste and talent were beyond all question, who backed them with expressions of esteem and admiration.

The letters to Murer, in this year 1878, continued to sound the same lugubrious note. Pissarro declared that « he knew not where to lay his head ».

« My dear friend. I accept your offer, my two canvases for 20 to 50 francs a piece, representing two autumns. I thank you for your trouble. I have put some very careful work into both of these pictures, especially the red house. I have never done anything better. »

A few days later he writes :

« I have received the 20 francs you sent me by my boy. Many thanks. I am still waiting for the man who shall deliver me out of this hell of inaction. I have had Desboutin and the Italian literary man to see me. The latter is very keen on this style of painting. He thinks so highly of my art that I am really taken aback and can hardly bring myself to believe what he says. I don't apparently understand my own work. Can it be that a foreigner has a clearer insight into it than I have myself ? »

And here is yet another letter of the same period.

« For a whole week now I have been rushing about Paris

vainly trying to discover the one man needed, the buyer of impressionist pictures. I am still looking for him. Chabrié has not come to any decision. He has deferred the matter for three months. In the end I ran an enthusiast to earth, but the Hoschedé¹ sale was my undoing. He will be going in for a few inferior things of mine which he will be able to get on the cheap at the Hôtel Drouot. And here I am once more without a penny. Will you once again lend me fifty francs to send to my people, who must be waiting impatiently for money. Please let me hear from you. The matter is urgent. »

Meanwhile, Renoir having painted a portrait of Mademoiselle Marie Meunier, Murer's sister, Pissarro began a portrait of Murer himself, which, like his sister's was on an oval shaped canvas. This of course took him for many consecutive days to the Boulevard Voltaire. He alluded to the matter first in a letter in which he advises the literary pastrycook to let his beard grow. « We will see about working it in on the portrait. It will be an additional attraction, for I fancy there will be some rich colouring to add. » Then he writes to ask for payment.

« I am in the greatest need of money, as you may well suppose. There is not a penny at Pontoise, and I absolutely must send them something. Could you settle up for the portrait now, deducting, of course, what I owe you for the various things you have supplied. I think, considering all the trouble I have taken, that a hundred and fifty francs would not be out of the way. I hope that will leave me a little over, which I shall at once send on to my wife. What hard times these are ! »

1. Hoschedé, who was editor of the *Gagne Petit*, and who, in 1880, started *l'Art et la Mode* was too closely associated with the Impressionist movement to be passed over without some mention by us. His sale took place in the spring of 1878, and Pissarro's pictures were knocked down at ludicrous prices.

But Murer jibbed at one hundred and fifty francs. He considered the price too high, seeing that Renoir had only asked a hundred for Mademoiselle Meunier's portrait. Pissarro replies as follows : —

« You were surprised at my asking a hundred and fifty francs for your portrait seeing that Renoir had only charged a hundred for Mademoiselle Marie's. I must tell you, therefore, that before fixing on the price I consulted our friend Renoir, and we both considered a hundred and fifty a reasonable figure. I know perfectly well that Renoir could command a higher price than I, seeing that he is well known as a portrait painter, but I don't see how I could ask less. »

The matter was smoothed over. Moreover, seeing that Pissarro was getting more and more hard up, it occurred to Murer that it would be a good idea to raffle some of his friend's pictures and to get some of his customers to take tickets. A hundred tickets at twenty sous, and four pictures. Pissarro was delighted, and offered six.

« I am sending you by the commissionaire four pictures for the lottery. My wife thinks it's an idea that might well be followed up, and she thanks you very much. I will bring along two small canvases to complete the series, if four are not enough.

« Another idea : Don't you think it would be better to put them into some cheap frames to make them more presentable, increassing the number of tickets by fifty, if necessary, to cover the cost ? What do you think ? »

The hundred tickets were easily placed. All the little servant girls of the neighbourhood wanted one. One of them happened to draw a lucky number. She rushed up to claim her prize. Meunier-Murer took her into the shop and there showed her, humbly propped up amid a glorious array of fruit tarts and cream buns, the picture she had won. Disappointed, the little maid drew a long face, looked mourn-

fully, now at the queer little painted thing, now at the succulent dainties by which it was encompassed. How she wished she had still got her twenty sous !

« If it's all the same to you », she said at last, « I'd rather have a cream bun. »

She was given the cream bun, and went away delighted ; and Murer, still more delighted, stuck to the picture.

But the lottery idea was not enough to rescue Pissarro, who, rushing all over Paris, now seething with the excitement of the *Exposition Universelle*, was feverishly and vainly seeking a purchaser for his pictures. And so we find him sending out another desperate appeal to Murer.

« I had made up my mind to stay on in Paris », he wrote in August 1878, « but I've just had a letter from my wife. She is so down-hearted, so hopeless, that mere common prudence tells me I must go to her. Of course that won't improve the dreadfully poor business I've been doing in Paris this last fortnight. I am going through a fearful crisis, and I can't see any way out.

« If an opportunity comes along, please try to get Leroux to take those two pictures of mine, the two that make a pair. You know the ones I mean ; three hundred francs for the two. That would enable me to give the butcher two hundred, and the balance, or some of it, could go to the baker, and I should be able to hang on in the hope of better days. Things are bad. »

And from Pontoise he wrote again, in the same strain. He counts on M. Leroux's¹ taking something. His letter shows him in desperately low spirits.

« I have marked the approximate price of my pictures

1. Three Pissarro's were included in the Leroux sale in 1888. They were *Maisons de Villageois*, *Effet de Neige*, 600 frs. ; *Une petite Fille de Ferme*, 300 frs. ; *Les Ramasseurs d'herbe*, 500 frs.

on the backs of them, should you be able to get M. Leroux, who is so difficult to move, to come along and see them. If I could do a deal with him, it would greatly ease matters, for penury is our lot at home, and it is dreadfully hard to keep above water. I can really hold on no longer. Everything I try to do goes wrong. I had been counting on selling a goodish few pictures through the American lady, but it turned out a very small affair, a little canvas of fifty francs. It fell into the gulf, like a drop of water into a raging fire. When, then, shall I get out of this coil? Shall I ever be able calmly to follow my bent? I can't put any heart into my studies because I am haunted by the idea that I shall have to give up art and look out for something else, if it were possible for me to tackle anything new. Melancholy outlook! »

A few weeks earlier, Sisley, also in terribly difficult circumstances, had suggested to his friends that they should get up a joint exhibition in order to attract the people who were visiting the *Exposition Universelle*. Durand-Ruel would certainly be quite willing to let them have the use of his galleries. But Renoir and Monet hesitated. Pissarro was definitely sceptical. In August he sent Murer the following letter full of bitterness and anger : —

« The silence of death is brooding over Art, amid the din and racket which comes from that furnace in the Champ de Mars !

Not a bit of good expecting anything from our exhibition : it would be a frost to have the thing at Durand-Ruel's, where our most illustrious masters are gathered together. You wouldn't get even a stray cat to come to our show ; people are absolutely indifferent. They've had enough of this morose style, this exacting, stupid school of painting which demands attention, reflexion. It's too highbrow, all that. These days people must see and feel without effort, and above all, they must be amused. Besides, what's the

good of art anyway ? Can you eat it ? No. Well then ! »

The Exhibition did not take place. It was postponed till the following year. Pissarro's position got worse still, and he could hold out no longer at Pontoise. Murer managed to get him a few purchasers, modest enough withal. An important letter comes in at this juncture. It is a letter in which is displayed Pissarro's great fondness for Guillaumin, and which is also an artist's moving profession of faith. When he met him at the Académie Suisse in 1864, Guillaumin was a quill-driver in the employ of the Compagnie d'Orléans in the Rue de Londres. He relinquished this post in 1866, having made up his mind to devote himself wholly to his painting, but after two years of penury he yielded to the entreaties of his family and in 1869 obtained a berth in the local government office of the City of Paris. Pissarro could not understand how an artist could thus divide his life between his art and a salaried employment, and made no bones about saying so. However, the years went by, and Guillaumin was once more anxious to free himself from a subjection which galled him, but which his family would have it was an indispensable condition of existence. Let us read what he says : —

« I have two most important things to see to. I have to go to Bellio's and ask him for some medicine for my wife, who is ill, and I have promised Miss Cassat to go and see her to find out whether she was able to sell a picture of mine to one of her Sunday visitors. You must imagine what a state of anxiety I am in at leaving a wife in an advanced state of pregnancy all alone in the country, without money and with two children to look after. Let Guillaumin think over the position a little ; let him bear in mind that when a man has only himself to trouble about, he can weather out any storm ; he has only got to keep himself. The grandparents have too much influence over him. He would do miles better

to send his City job to blazes. Of course you've got to have a bit of grit in you ; there mustn't be any chopping and changing about. I was at Saint Thomas in '52 in a well paid job, but I couldn't stick it. Without more ado I cut the whole thing and bolted to Caracas in order to get clear of the bondage of bourgeois life. What I have been through you can't imagine, and what I am still suffering is terrible, very much more than when young and full of enthusiasm and ardour, convinced as I now am that I have no future to look forward to. Nevertheless it seems to me that, if I had to begin over again, I should do precisely the same thing. Does that mean that one ought to advise a friend to go and do likewise ? It all depends on the temperament, the convictions of the individual ¹. »

He found it impossible to continue living this unsettled sort of life, now in Paris, now at Pontoise. He therefore resolved to settle down with his family in Paris and wait for better days. He wrote to Théodore Duret at the beginning of November 1878, as follows :

« I am moving next Tuesday to No. 18 Rue des Trois Frères, Paris. I shall do everything I possibly can to scrape up a little money, and I shall even try and fix up some business with Martin if an opportunity should offer. But you can imagine what a bitter pill that will be for me to swallow, after being so greatly disparaged by him, for he openly declared to all and sundry that I was hopelessly out of the running. My customers took it all in. I was even afraid that you would be influenced by him. In any case, if you can, recommend me some new clients. I shall be delighted to carry out their behests, for it's no use counting any further on Martin's friends ². »

1. Unpublished letter.

2. Unpublished letter.

✓ His quarrels with Martin had now been going on for some time. Of all Impressionist work, Pissarro's paintings were the most difficult to sell, the genuinely rustic character of his models and the humble nature of his subjects being distasteful to the majority of purchasers. And Martin told everybody that Pissarro had no chance of getting out of the rut if he went on painting in such heavy, common style « with that muddy palette of his », this last touch being the very height of misstatement. On the other hand, Pissarro had an excellent supporter in Portier, another dealer who acted as intermediary between artists and collectors. Austere and rather frigid in style, he had at first confined himself to painters of the 1830 school, and then the Impressionists had excited his lugubrious interest. At Bourron, in the department of the Seine-et-Marne, on the outskirts of the Forest of Fontainebleau, he kept an eye on the output of the artists, while at 54 Rue Lepic he did business with the collectors. He was often to be seen at Manet's studio.

Here then, for the time being, we have Pissarro settled in Paris, right in the centre of things, and scouring every quarter of the capital to ferret out purchasers for his pictures. In a letter to Duret he says that he is very poorly housed, in a place very inconvenient for work and still more so for exhibiting his pictures to such collectors as were sufficiently courageous to face the climb up to Montmartre. « I have had recourse », he goes on, « to Portier to beat up the neighbourhood. He certainly doesn't put much energy into the business, his coldness of disposition being against that, but all the same I am glad to have found someone willing to undertake the task. So you see business is dreadful. Soon I shall be an old man, my sight will be failing, and I shall be no better off than I was twenty years ago ¹. »

1. An unpublished letter.

It is worthy of note that this is the first occasion on which he complains of the unsatisfactory state of his eyes, and from this time onwards we shall find them causing him keen anxiety.

Shortly after this, a proposal for a fourth exhibition of the group came up for discussion. It was Pissarro who revived the idea, and he was willing to take all risks. But Sisley cried off, and so did Renoir, who put all his hopes in the Salon. Monet only joined in with reluctance.

On the 10th April the Exhibition, extremely well housed in some splendid rooms at No. 28 Avenue de l'Opéra, opened without Renoir, without Sisley, without Berthe Morisot, but with new adherents like Forain, Lebourg, Henry Somm, Zandomeneghi, Mary Cassat, Marie Bracquemond. But this time the word Impressionists did not appear on the posters, and the advertisement merely spoke of an *Exposition des Indépendants*. There were about the same number of scoffers and admirers as on the three previous occasions ; but crowds of people went — 15,400 all told. Each exhibitor got 439 francs 50 for his share of the profits. The following month, at the Salon, Renoir at length achieved his first great success with that masterpiece of his, *Madame Charpentier et ses Enfants*, « Renoir has had a great success at the Salon » writes Pissarro to Murer, on the 27th May. « I think he's well on the road now. All the better for him. It's no joke, being hard up. »

Unfortunately there was to be no relenting on the part of fortune so far as Pissarro was concerned. In April 1880, in a room at No. 10 Rue des Pyramides, the group opened their fifth exhibition — a woefully shrunken affair, Renoir and Sisley holding aloof, and Monet, who had just been turned down at the Salon, busy with preparations to exhibit on his own account at *La Vie Moderne*. There were, however, some new comers, J. F. and J. M. Raffaëlli, Vignon, Vidal and

✓Gauguin. Pissarro, in his enthusiasm for colour harmony, had painted his frames green, yellow, violet, and so on, to suit each particular picture.

The Exhibition yielded very little in the way of cash, and the year 1880 went by without Pissarro's domestic troubles being in any way relieved. Things were at a dead-fully low ebb. We find Monet informing Duret of a set-back he had sustained at le Havre, where some pictures he had sent there had excited the hostility of the local art collectors. The whole thing had been « one gigantic roar of laughter ». However, 1881 promised better things, and as early as February there was a distinct improvement in the outlook. By some sort of miracle Durand-Ruel had managed to find an outlet for his enormous stock of new work. He lost no time in signalling the fact to his artists, who went wild with joy at this sudden change in the situation. At last Pissarro was able to rest on his oars a little. He managed not only to pay off his debts, but to put a little by. Furthermore, the sixth exhibition of the group, which took place in the same rooms as in 1874, in the Boulevard des Capucines, was looked on more sympathetically than its predecessors. Were the art-loving public changing their views? Even the critics referred to this unexpected reversal of opinion, Huysmans was now in a position to write : « Messieurs Pissarro and Monet have at last emerged victorious from the terrible conflict. » And so what a lot of good work was done in the course of this consoling year ! Moreover, the same prospering gales bade fair to continue through 1882. « I am not, as the Romantics say, rolling in money », writes Pissarro to Duret on the 24 th February. « I am enjoying the fruits of a modest but steady sale. My only fear is a relapse into the old conditions. » In March the seventh group-exhibition was opened in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

He made up his mind to leave his house at Pontoise,

which was too damp for him to risk spending another winter there. It was touch-and-go with his eyesight, an ulcer affecting his left eye. He first went and fixed his quarters on the Quai du Pothuit, in Pontoise itself, then in the village of Osny, about two miles away. Finally he discovered a house at Eragny-Bazincourt near Gisors, where he shortly afterwards took up his residence. It was there he was destined to end his days. But the new season, from a business point of view, did not promise well. Once again the sales ceased. This sudden reaction gave pause to Durand-Ruel. He stopped buying, and back things went into the melting pot again. He now thought he would sound public opinion in more direct fashion, by giving a series of special exhibitions each devoted to the work of one of the Impressionists. They were held at No. 9 Boulevard de la Madeleine and lasted from March to June 1883. Pissarro's dates were from the 1st to the 25th May, following Monet and Renoir, and preceding Sisley. The pecuniary result was absolutely nil. Durand-Ruel was exhausted and disheartened, and it looked as if he would really have to give up this time. An exhibition of the group's works in London, the first to be held in England, at the galleries of Messrs Dowdeswill, 33, New Bond Street, where Pissarro had eight canvases, showed that critics in England were even more recalcitrant than on the continent.

Once more Pissarro found himself compelled to go hawking his pictures about Paris, taking them to Murer, Caillebotte, Duret, Chevrier and Dr. Bellio. Portier could sell nothing; Tanguy would only have them on sale or return. What was to be done? However, he recovered his moral energy, upon which the fatalism he owed to his semi-creole origin was not without effect. He went off to work at Rouen, where he came across Murer, who left him there completely enthralled by the beauty of the Norman capital. He set to

work to paint its bridges, its harbour, its old, narrow streets, and the places round about. He met Gauguin, who had just arrived with his family — Gauguin, on whom he exercised so great an influence at that time — and forthwith, being kind, cordial and brotherly as ever, he employed himself in putting him in the way of things there, in acting as his guide and in introducing him to friends and art-collectors.

It was decided not to have any collective exhibition in 1884. What was the good of it? The position was now worse than ever. « I have managed to scrape together a few pence, a mere nothing, just enough to carry me on for three or four days at Eragny », writes Pissarro to Monet on the 13th May. « I can go no farther. I am at my wit's end ¹. And when Murer suggested to him that he should give a little exhibition at Rouen, he replied on the 8th August with the following bitter and sorrowful epistle :

« I don't think anything of the idea of selling pictures at Rouen. Be sure, my dear friend, that when they clapped eyes on the studies I have turned out recently, they would heave rotten apples at me. Remember that in Paris we are still outcasts and vagabonds. No, it is impossible for an art which upsets so many old convictions to win general approval, especially at Rouen, the country of Flaubert, whom they dare not own. No, your bourgeois is a bourgeois from the tips of his toes to the hair of his head! Tell Gauguin that after thirty years of painting I am quite on the rocks. Let the youngsters bear that in mind. »

Let us now retrace our steps and consider the works that Pissarro produced through these ten years of troublous life. Until 1882 he had passed his days in contemplation of the fields and of those who toiled in them round about Pontoise, without any other diversion than was afforded by the visits

1. Quoted by Gustave Geffroy in his *Claude Monet*.

he paid from time to time to Piette at Montfoucault. And he was wont to declare that this corner of the Ile de France, with which he had grown so familiar that he knew every clump of trees in it and every fold of the hills, was, as it were, a whole world to him, and offered an endless variety of subjects for his brush. Then he left l'Hermitage, and made acquaintance with the enchanting beauties of the Epte valley, a region rich with the lush verdure of mid-Normandy. It was with a new delight that he familiarised himself with a land of richer and more characteristic loveliness than the region of Pontoise. There he found subjects for some admirable pictures, and attained a power of expression that we look for in vain in any other artist. Not that the artist of Eragny is to be regarded as superior to the artist of l'Hermitage; but Pissarro, could not fail to add to his powers amid surroundings where the delicacy of the atmosphere that the early autumn days hung with mists of gossamer kept prompting him to seek for ever fresh methods of expression.

He had been devoting himself for some years past to water colour work and on one occasion, having been amusing himself by sketching in water colours a design for a fan, he was praised first by Martin and then by Durand, who said that work of such delicate fantasy was bound to find favour. In 1878, when he was at Piette's, he took the horse pond at Montfoucault as the subject for a fan, and thenceforth, from time to time, he took to painting fans and became, as he put it, an *eventailliste*. In 1881 he painted a fan in water colour, taking as his subject a *Village Fête*, and in 1883, a country scene, *The Harvest*; then the *Wine Harvest*, and then *Flowers*, *Autumn*, a *Rainbow*, a *Shepherd*, a *Morning Scene* and a *Snow Effect*. He produced a large number of these works, which hold us not only by their freshness and delicate gradation of tone, but, still more, by the engaging

fantasy with which he portrayed the scenery and the figures, and shed an atmosphere of elegance over scenes depicting not the high-born personages of Watteau and Lancret, but homely peasants in the midst of their toil, herdsmen and shepherds with their cattle and sheep, men and animals united in rustic harmony.

It was more especially after 1878 that he found in water colours a regular substitute for oils, and before long he had in his portfolio a large collection of sheets on which he had fixed such scenes as caught his eye, the many-hued restless throng of the market place, for example ; indeed the market at Pontoise, the markets at Rouen, supplied him with material for some incomparable pictures. He notes the gestures of the woodman, he portrays to the life a peasant woman enjoying her mid-day nap, or a woman sewing, or doing her hair, or washing clothes, or gathering herbs, or minding her cow or her goat, her sheep or her geese. And what a new thing it was, this art of water colour drawing, little spots mottling the paper, little pin points of colour so deft and swift, and expressing so well the transitoriness of things, creating the sense of movement, and imparting the touch of life.

But the pure water colour and the pastel were equally suited to his direct and unpremeditated methods. Landscape pastels, like that of the *Thatched Cottage* at Auvers, which belongs to 1879 ; pastels of figures, like the *Woman with the Sheaf* (1885). And it was the pastel again which served him as a medium for the interpretation of certain aspects of Paris — we shall shortly refer to them again — the *Boulevard de Clichy*, for example. He also liked the dull surface of the water-colour, as some of his principal works bear witness, such as *The Poultry Market at Gisors* (1885) and the *Girl Minding Sheep* (1890). And then what of his works in crayon ? What a riot of appealing drawings in black,

black and white and sometimes with lights deftly dashed in with coloured chalks. All modes of expression interested him, and there is not one that he didn't more or less make his own.

This eager desire for new things, new methods, this perpetual restlessness, brought about, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1886, a consequence which all but had a lasting effect on the rest of his career as a painter. The method of the division of tones, as opposed to the blending of them on palette or canvas which excludes or destroys pure coloration, had been talked about for some time in certain studios, where the experiments of O. N. Rood and the new scientific ideas advanced by Chevreul in his *Loi du contraste des couleurs* afforded matter for interesting debates. Camille Pissarro and his eldest son Lucien at once became enthusiastic over this division of tones whose luminous brilliance made even the brightest impressionist paintings look dull in comparison. Shortly after this, at Guillaumin's, Pissarro met Paul Signac, who, at the beginning of 1885, took him to see Seurat. The latter had no difficulty in winning the adhesion of his celebrated senior, and before long the division of colours had no more fervent apostle than Pissarro, who was always ready to throw himself with a will into the fight for what he held to be the truth. His brother Impressionists were, naturally, the first to experience his proselytising zeal. Monet, to whom he laid a regular siege, grew angry, and threatened to have no more to do with him. Renoir, gaily ironic, contented himself with saluting him with the words « bon jour, Seurat ». It now became generally known that he was allying himself with the practitioners of the 'petit point', heedless of the consequences of so tardy a development. There had been no exhibition of the group since 1882. In May 1886, an exhibition — the eighth — was opened at

No. 1 Rue Laffitte, in the rooms of the Maison Dorée. Seurat exhibited his epoch-making *Sunday at the Grande-Jatte*; Paul Signac displayed his brilliance as a 'divisionniste', and Pissarro, le père Pissarro, as he was now called, was represented by pictures that were the last word in the new method. No more mixed tones for him! The landscapes of Eragny-Bazincourt vibrated with a light unsullied by any tone that was not perfectly pure. « The innovations of MM. Pissarro, Seurat and Signat » was a sub-title given by Felix Féneon to his critical pamphlet *Les Impressionnistes*, published in 1886, which gave a *résumé* of the history of the school. He went on to say of Pissarro, « Transforming his manner, he brings to neo-impressionism his mathematical rigour of analysis and the authority of his name; henceforth he systematically dissociates his tones. Sunlit landscapes, white houses amid floweving orchards, far-off vistas »...

For two consecutive years he exhibited nothing but divisionist work. In 1887, an international exhibition of painting having been organised at the Georges Petit Gallery, he only exhibited pictures painted in this manner. However, his buyers began to object; his dealers refused to support him in what they called an untimely production, and Durand-Ruel himself advised him to abandon a mode of painting which he said he was convinced was not going to last. In spite of all opposition, he held on for yet another year. Then he began to modify his method a little, to tone down his colours and to venture, here and there, on a return to his old ways. Finally the earlier Pissarro reappeared and freely avowed that his whole-hearted experiment had proved to him that the new method could not do everything.

The year 1890 saw — the catalogue prefaced by Gustave Geffroy — a Pissarro exhibition which was held, during the months of February and March, at the Galerie Boussod and Valadon, which was managed by Van Gogh's brother. In

February 1892 there was another very important exhibition at Durand-Ruel's. It was introduced by Georges Lecomte in a preface which was a model of its kind. Fame, then, was coming at last to the painter of Eragny, coming slowly, much more slowly than it came to Renoir and Monet. At May's sale, in 1890, two of Pissarro's paintings reached very high prices, the *Entrance to the Village* fetching 2,100 francs, and the *Roquencourt Road* 1,400. This time the bidding was something more than a mere fluke. People were buying him; he was being given a regular place in collections. And now, was life easier for him at last? Perhaps. If it was, the only pleasure he derived from the fact was that he was free to attack his work with greater ardour than ever.

During the last ten years of his life he did indeed work with feverish activity. He was for ever travelling. Sometimes it was Belgium, and England, sometimes Burgundy, Rouen, Dieppe, Havre. In 1897, he began a series depicting Paris under different aspects, which he wanted to be as full and varied as possible. He began by painting the Rue d'Amsterdam after a fall of snow — he was putting up at an hotel close to the station — then the tumultuous crowds that thronged the Boulevard Montmartre one wild Mardi-Gras. From a bedroom in the Hotel de Russie at the corner of the Rue Drouot, his eye could take in the Boulevards stretching away into the distance and often, as we passed and looked up at his window, we were vouchsafed a glimpse of the old fellow, sitting warmly muffled up, palette and brush in hand. From the Hotel du Louvre in 1898, the Place du Théâtre Français and the view along the Avenue de l'Opéra. In 1899 and 1900 — installed in quarters in the Rue de Rivoli — he painted the Tuileries, the Carrousel, at different times of the year, at various hours of the day. They were admirable examples, and yet they only gave him qualified satisfaction.

« The friends who told you I had some fine pictures of the Tuileries are very indulgent », he said to Monet in a letter dated 7th January 1900. « I am not very well pleased with them. I have done better work. I am struggling against old age¹. » In 1901 he was living on the second floor of the historic Louis XIII house at the corner of the Pont Neuf and the Quai, which had once been the home of Madame Rolland. From there he painted numerous pictures of the Cité, of the Pont Neuf, of the « terre plein » that bears the statue of Henri IV. In 1903 he came back to the Tuileries, to the animation of the Pont-Royal, and then, having taken up his abode in a house at the corner of the Boulevard Morland and the Boulevard Henri IV, he devoted a few brilliant studies to the portrayal of this quarter.

Side by side with his work as a painter Camille Pissarro did some engraving, of which for a long time no one suspected the importance. From 1863, indeed, until 1903 these works punctuated his artistic life with fair regularity. Of all the Impressionists he it was who devoted himself with the greatest regularity to the arts of reproduction, etching in black or colours, dry-point, lithography.

He began in 1863 with an etching, *The Water's Edge*, in which Corot's influence is evident. In 1864 he engraved a *Field near Asnières*, of which only one proof is known to exist; in 1865 a *Street at Montmartre*, of which also one proof only is extant. These were followed in 1866 by a *View of La Roche Guyon*, in 1867 by a *Negress*. Clearly at this stage it was merely a distraction to beguile his leisure. From 1867 to 1873 he continued thus to amuse himself. It was then that he engraved the *Hillsides* and a *Landscape at Pontoise*. In 1874 he etched a fine *Portrait of Cézanne*, a Cézanne in cap and great coat, of which 18 or 20 copies

1. Gustave Geffroy : *Claude Monet*, page 167.

were pulled, then two landscapes at Pontoise and a *Scene of Peasant Life*. His work was augmented, in 1875, by a plate *In the Fields at Emery*, but he did no engraving in 1876 or 1877. In 1878 there was a further plate, *Woman selling chestnuts*. In December of the same year, Théodore Duret wrote advising him to try and sell some of his etchings in London, where there were a large number of people who went in for engravings. He answered saying « I shall never venture to believe that such formless attempts at etching as mine are could find a sale in London. I have had neither time nor means to pursue my attempts; I should have required two or three years of real hard work. The necessity of selling impels me to the water-colour, so etchings are set aside for the time being. » And a little later he says « I am resolving to abstain from sending any etchings to London... It is evidently a good idea to group painter-etchers together in an association, but there is as yet nothing much in it for us, or at all events it will be useless to expect ever to find favour with work as imperfect as my own ». He did not, then, plume himself on his early etchings, but he nevertheless pursued his apprenticeship in an art with which he was determined to become better acquainted, and he soon became sufficiently sure of himself to face the London collectors to whom he was introduced and recommended by Legros. Degas, who warmly encouraged him to persevere, started in 1880 to bring out a series of original etchings, giving his publication the title of *Day and Night*. Pissarro engraved for the first number — it was also the last, since the venture received no support — a *Woodland Scene at L'Hermitage*, which was much praised by connoisseurs.

Pissarro was a delightful man, and so profoundly human that any wrong done to another angered him like a personal offence. You could not set eyes on him without being impressed by the simple majesty of his countenance, on which there

was never a hint of hardness or disdain. His eyes, in which he suffered so much, were magnificent, and they smiled as his lips smiled, putting at their ease whoever came to see him. Certainly a look of sadness would sometimes gather in those eyes of his, true artist's eyes, so deeply in love with the beauty of things, but that would be when he was alone and beset, as he so often was, by manifold anxieties. His own troubles he was fain to set aside so as to take thought only for other people, whom he endeavoured to hearten and console with his kindly philosophical smile. When we became acquainted with him in April 1890, he was beginning to invest himself with that aureole of serenity which lent an added charm to his gracious senescence. Dressed entirely in black velvet, he presented a fine appearance, and he looked amazingly young, despite the wealth of snowy hair and beard that befringed his features. He was full of wit, and the vivacity of his repartees enlivened the Impressionists' monthly dinners at the Café Riche, Worthy of being painted by Rembrandt in the fur trimmed cloak with which the great Dutch Master invests his Rabbis, his learned Doctors and his burgomasters, he looked inexpressibly venerable with his fine regular features, his big oriental's eyes so full of light, his beard in which advancing years were snowing their flakes of white, his beautiful hands exhibiting the delicacy of a master of the brush.

It seemed as though, since it was only his sight that was failing, he might live till a very advanced age. But an abscess of the prostate got the better of his vigorous constitution, and his cheerful serenity. He died on the thirteenth of November 1903 in his home on the Boulevard Morland, and his remains were buried in the cemetery of Père la Chaise. The funeral was a very modest one, without any of the pomp which attends the obsequies of officially recognised mediocrity. It was indeed no mediocrity, but a

genuine master of his art, who was then taking his departure from the world, one of those rare beings who can flatter themselves that they have left their imprint on the art of their epoch. The originality of Camille Pissarro grew firmer in proportion as the work of the artists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century gathered volume and character. Pissarro identified himself with a love of nature that combined strength with delicacy of insight more genuinely rustic than that of any other artist whom the life of our countryside has inspired. There is nothing fanciful, nothing literary in his country scenes, nothing but the life of the country folk noted by the subtle eye of an artist. As for the technical processes of his art, no one ever studied the matter more deeply than did Pissarro, who never came in contact with a skilled artist but he must needs question him forthwith on the minutest details of his method. To sum up, he was a great classic in the highest acceptation of the term, that is to say a master craftsman of form, who had cast off from the shores of Tradition in search of new realms to conquer, and it is of Poussin rather than of Corot that we think when we study his immense output and endeavour to define its character and its message.

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PORTRAIT DE L'ARTISTE

Portrait of the artist.

Selbstbildnis des Künstlers.

Ritratto dell' artista.

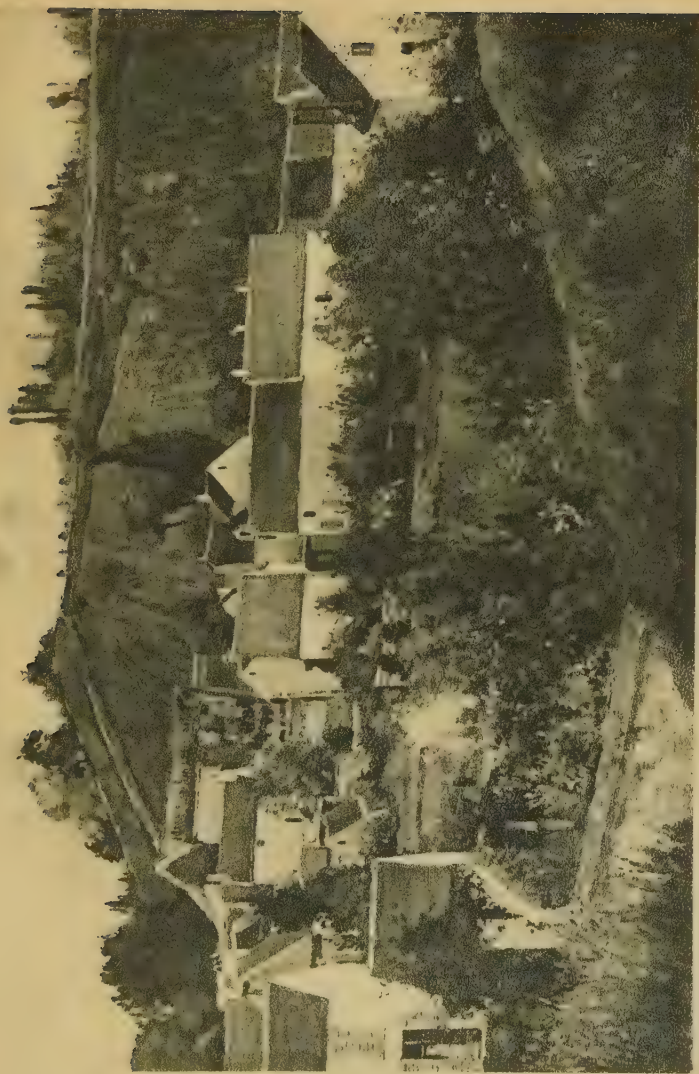
Retrato del artista.



SOUS-BOIS

*In the wood.
Im Walde.*

*Sotto bosco.
Bajo los arboles.*



*L'Ermitage, the hillside.
Die Kaste der Einsidelei.*

LA COTE DE L'ERMITAGE

*Il pendio dell' Ermitage
La cuesta de "l'Ermitage".*



The donkey ride.

Der Spazierritt auf dem Esel.

LA PROMENADE A ANE

La passeggiata sull' asino.

El pascio en burro.



LE PATIS, PRÈS PONTOISE

The Pasture Land, near Pontoise.
Pâtis bei Pontoise.

Il pâtis, presso Pontoise.
El praão, cerca de Pontoise.



LA MEULE

*The rick.
Der Getreideschober.*

*La catasta.
El montón de cereales.*



L'ECUISE

*The lock.
Die Schleuse.*

*La catteratta.
La esclusa.*



PAYSAGE A LOUVECIENNES

*Landscape, Louveciennes.
Landschaft bei Louveciennes.*

*Paesaggio a Louveciennes.
Paisaje de Louveciennes.*



ROUTE DE SYDENHAM

Sydenham Road.
Landstrasse von Sydenham.

Strada di Sydenham.
Carretera de Sydenham.



CRYSTAL PALACE

Crystal Palace.
Crystal Palace.

Crystal Palace.
Crystal Palace.



ROUTE DE SYDENHAM

Sydenham Road.

Landstrasse von Sydenham.

Strada di Sydenham.

Carretera de Sydenham.



PORTRAIT DE FEMME

Portrait of a woman.
Frauenbildnis

Ritratto di donna
Retrato de mujer



BORDS DE L'OISE, ENVIRONS DE PONTOISE

Banks of the Oise, near Pontoise.

Rive dell' Oise, dintorni di Pontoise.

Oise Ufer, bei Pontoise.

Orillas de l'Oise, a brededores de Pontoise.





PAYSAGE D'HIVER, ENVIRONS DE LOUVECIENNES

Winter Scene, near Louveciennes.

Paesaggio d'inverno, dintorni di Louveciennes.

Winterlandschaft bei Louveciennes.

Paysage de invierno, alrededores de Louveciennes.



LA ROUTE

*The road.
Die Landstrasse.*

*La strada.
La carretera.*



LE JARDIN DE LA VILLE, A PONTOISE

The Town-Garden, Pontoise.
Stadtpark in Pontoise

Il giardino della città a Pontoise.
El jardín de la ciudad en Pontoise.



LA MARE AUX CANARDS, MONTFOUCAULT

The Duck-pond, Montfoucault.

Die Entenpfütze in Montfoucault.

La palude colle anitre, Montfoucault.

La charca de los patis, Montfoucault.



EFFET DE NEIGE A L'ERMITAGE, PONTOISE

Snow effect at l'Ermitage, Pontoise.

Effetto di neve all' Ermitage, Pontoise.

Schnee-Effekt in der Einsidelei bei Pontoise.



L'ABREUVOIR DE MONTFOUCAULT

The Horse-pond, Montfoucault.
Die Tränke von Montfoucault.

Abeveratoio di Montfoucault.
El abrevadero de Montfoucault.



LE JARDIN DE PONTOISE

The garden, Pontoise.
Der Garten von Pontoise.

Il giardino di Pontoise.
El jardin de Pontoise.



LA MÈRE LARCHEVÊQUE

Mother Larchevêque.

Das Mütterchen Larchevêque.

La vecchia Larchevêque.

La vieja Larchevêque.



LA PETITE BONNE DE CAMPAGNE

The little Country Servant Girl.
Das Landmädchen.

La piccola serva di paese
La criada di pueblo



TETE DE PAYSAN
(PASTEL)

Peasant's Head.
Bauernkopf.

Testa di paeseno.
Cabeza de campesino.



LA TRICOTEUSE

The Knitters.
Die Strickerin.

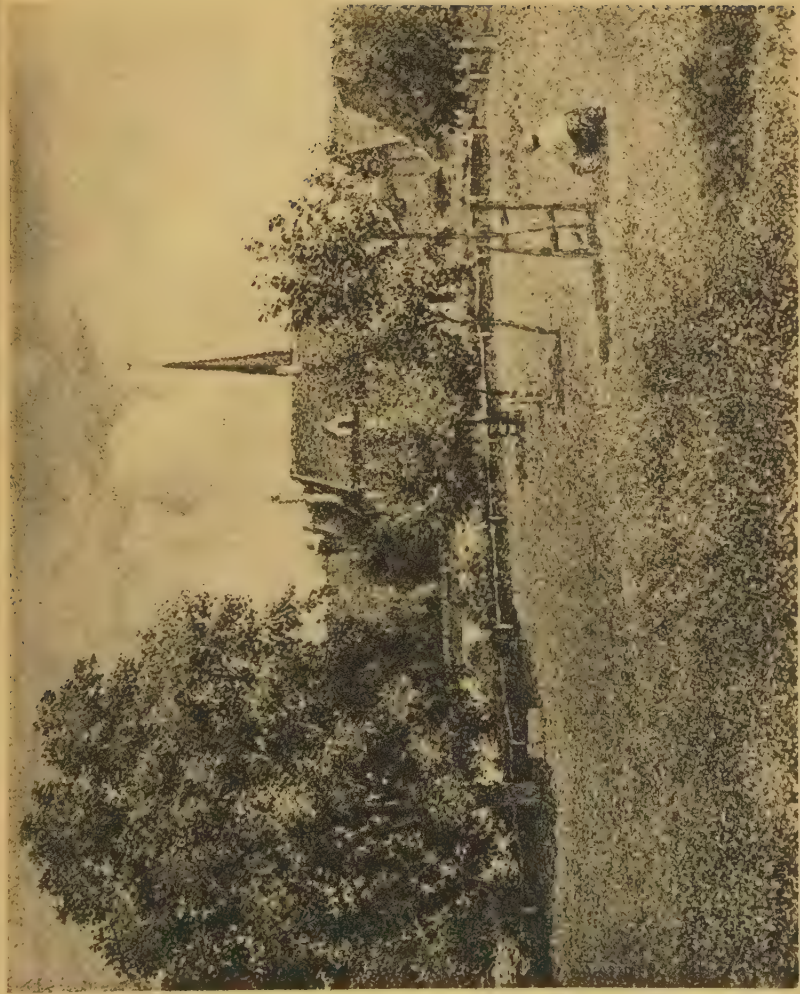
La magliatrice.
La calcetera.



*Sirada a Osny.
Carretera de Osny.*

ROUTE A OSNY

*Road at Osny.
Die Landstrasse nach Osny.*



L'ÉGLISE D'ERAGNY
(MAISON DE LA SOURDE)

*The Church, Eragny (deaf woman's house).
Die Kirche in Eragny.*

*La chiesa d'Eragny (casa della sorda).
La iglesia de Eragny (la casa de la sorda).*



LE MARCHÉ

(GIO ACHE)

The Market water-colour.
Der Markt.

Il mercato (pittura a guazzo)
El mercado (aguada)



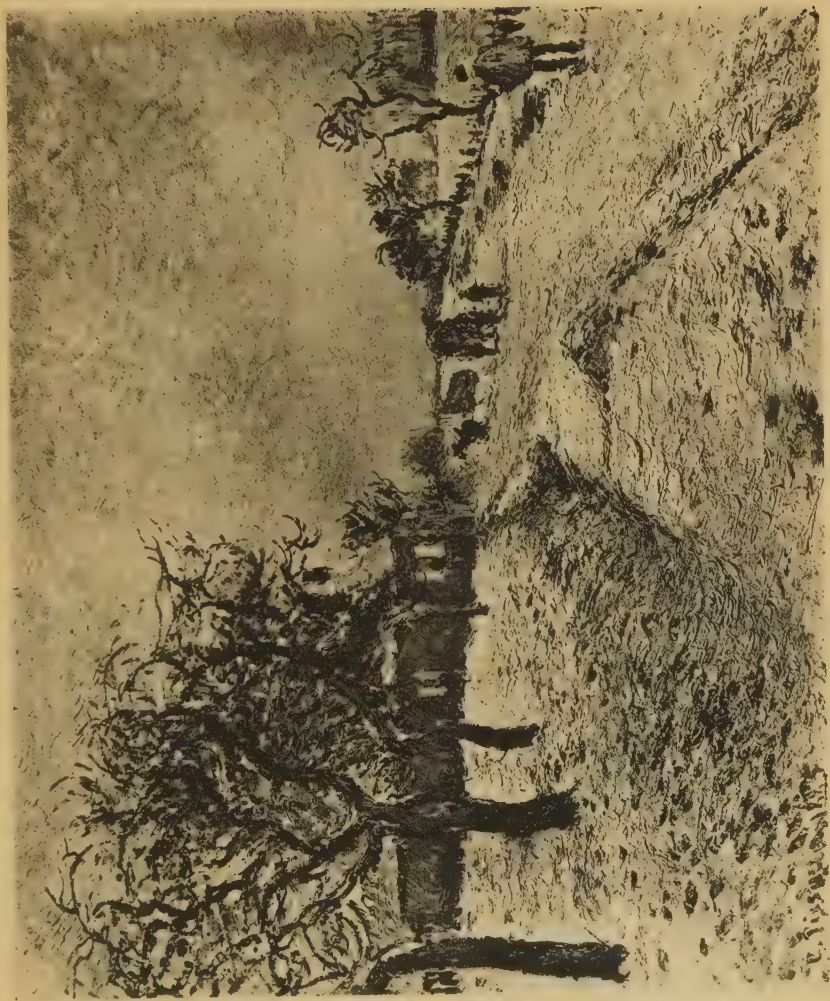
LE THÉÂTRE DES ARTS A ROUEN

Théâtre des Arts, Rouen.

Il Teatro degli Arti, Rouen.

Theater der Kunst in Rouen.

El Teatro de las Artes en Rouen.



EFFET DE NEIGE

Snow effect.
Schneelandschaft.

Effetto di neve.
Effetto di neve.



LES FANEUSES
(GOUACHE)

*The Haymakers (water-colour).
Frauen bei der Heuernte.*

*Le giornalere (pittura a guazzo).
Las secadoras de heno (aguada).*



LE TRIAGE DES CHOUX

Sorting the Cabbages.

Das Aussuchen der Kohlköpfe.

La scelta degli cavoli.

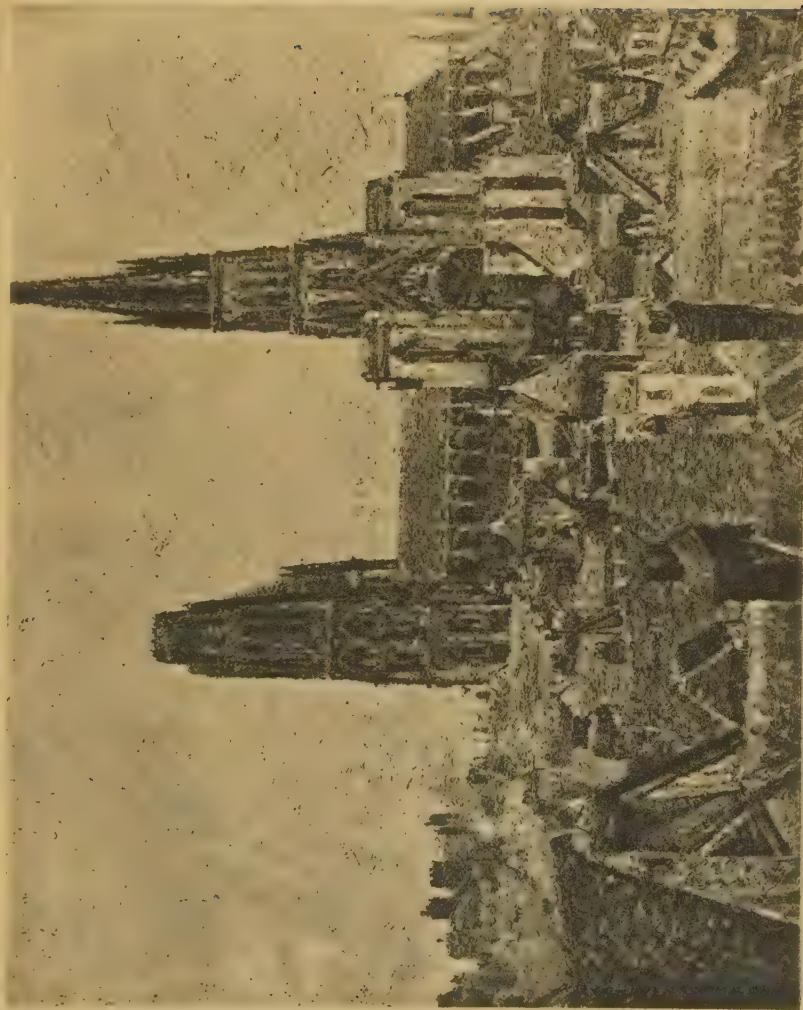
Selección de coles



BAIGNEUSE A ÉRAGNY

A woman bathing at Éragny.
Die Badende in Éragny.

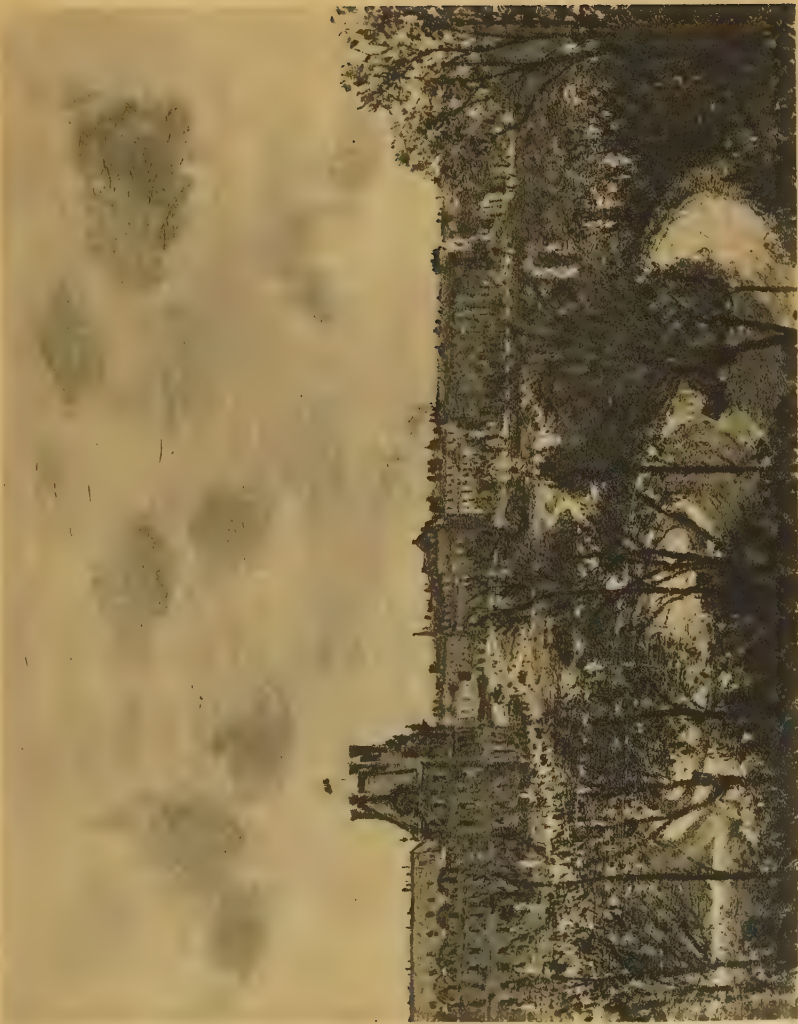
Donna bagnante a Éragny.
Una bañista en Éragny



LES TOITS DU VIEUX ROUEN

The Housetops at Old Rouen.
Die Dächer vom alten Rouen.

I tetti del vecchio Rouen.
Los tejados del viejo Ruan.



JARDIN DU LOUVRE, MATIN, TEMPS GRIS

The Louvre Garden, a grey morning.

Giardino del Louvre, mattino, tempo grigio.

Louvre-Garten am Morgen bei trübem Wetter.

Jardin del Louvre, mañana, tiempo gris.



LA PLACE DU THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS

Place du Théâtre Français.

Der Platz des Théâtre Français.

La piazza del Théâtre Français.

La plaza del Teatro Francés



SAINT-SEVER, ROUEN, APRÈS-MIDI

Saint-Sever, Rouen, afternoon.

Saint-Sever, Rouen, nel pomeriggio.
"Saint-Sever", Rouen, la tarde.

Saint-Sever, Rouen, am Nachmittag.



AVENUE DE L'OPÉRA, SOLEIL, MATINÉE D'HIVER

avenue de l'Opéra, sunshine, winter morning.

Corso dell' Opera, sole, mattino d'inverno.

Avenue de l'Opéra, Sonne am Wintermorgen.

Avenida de la Opera, sol, mañana de invierno.



LA FOIRE A DIEPPE, SOLEIL, APRÈS-MIDI

The Fair, Dieppe, a sunny afternoon.

La fiera a Dieppe, sole, nel pomeriggio.

Der Jahrmakrt in Dieppe, Sonne, Nachmittag.

La feria de Dieppe, sol, por la tard.



L'ÉGLISE SAINT-JACQUES, DIEPPE, TEMPS PLUVIEUX, MATIN

*The Church of Saint-Jacques,
Dieppe, a rainy morning.*

*Die Kirche Saint-Jacques, Dieppe,
Regenwetter am Morgen.*

*La chiesa Saint-Jacques, Dieppe,
tempo piovoso.*

*La iglesia Saint-Jacques, Dieppo.
tiempo pluvioso, mañana.*



VIEILLE FEMME ASSISE. INTÉRIEUR A MORET

Old Woman seated. Interior at Moret. Vecchia donna sedata. Interno a Moret.
Sitzende alte Frau. Häuslichkeit in Moret. Vieja sentada. Interior en Moret.



